

Checked
1987

SINGLE TO SPAIN

Acc. No.	12420.
Class No.	G. 4.
Book No.	805

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2273



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C H A P T E R O N E

Single to Spain

PARIS seemed incredibly grey. A drizzle of rain sent the honest bourgeoisie hurrying home, leaving the streets empty. Never before had the Metro seemed so full of stale garlic and cheap perfume.

My train was timed to leave at twelve-thirty, so with two hours in hand I sought for food. In a restaurant within a few minutes' walk of the Quai d'Orsay soup, omelette and steak gave Paris a kindlier look. My fellow-diners were typical office workers taking a coffee or liqueur. A man seated with his wife at the next table made the usual pleasantries:

"Monsieur is on holiday?"

A haversack and tweeds suggested this.

"You are going far? To Spain!"

For almost an hour my friend gave me his views on the civil war. For him, the present conflict was a clear issue between the Catholic Church and Freemasonry. The discussion left Madrid and Burgos for

Paris in the nineties and Devil's Island. He regarded Dreyfus as a burning question of the moment. Madame sipped her *crème de menthe* throughout the discourse without a word. Her expression was that of a cinema attendant at the end of a record-breaking film.

I paid my bill, took leave and made my way to the station. Although the Cerbère express was not yet due to start, the platform was crowded. I saw few first- or second-class travellers among the poorly-dressed crowd. At last the train arrived and we pushed our way aboard. About forty of the crowd were obviously a single party. They left their women on the platform while they took their odd bags, cases and parcels and left them on the seats. This was no usual leave-taking. There was an expression of tension and emotional excitement in their kisses and embraces. Quite suddenly it dawned on me that my fellow-passengers were recruits for the Spanish Government.

After an age, our train began to move off. Those left on the platform saluted with the clenched fist. They were joined by the porters and even the ticket-collector, a Clemenceau in uniform, raised his fist to the departing train.

My only companions in the carriage, seated in the two opposite corners, were a plump be-whiskered man with an enormous watch-chain which acted as a



demarkation line between his chest and impressive belly, and a respectably dressed, provincial-looking female. I stretched myself out on the empty seat and observed Falstaff eyeing the female. Soon, I fell to watching the chain swaying gently against his stomach with the even rocking of the train.

Whether I had slept for a long time or whether the watch-chain was a fast worker in breaking down the social barriers, I could not judge, for when I awoke my companions were lying together on the hard and narrow seat.

A third-class compartment on a French railway is no bed of love. Amorous ingenuity was baffled and my apparent comfort acted as a source of annoyance to Watch-Chain. He leaned over and gave me a dig.

"You are not in England now; have you no manners, no gallantry? Here is madame cramped in a corner while you take the whole carriage. Zut! It is monstrous!"

Leaving his newly-found consort, he filled two-thirds of my side of the carriage. With every kilometre we covered he seemed to spread and inflate like a captive balloon. I eventually moved into his original corner leaving Watch-chain lying at full length, his defeat forgotten in sleep. Then I too dozed off.

I was awakened by the train jerking to a stop. It was daylight and the station was Toulouse. Here we

received an addition. Four pallid, unhealthy adolescents, attired in funereal black, were shepherded in by two Sisters of Mercy. It was my turn to dig Watch-chain.

"Come, you cannot keep these holy ones from a seat, *mon vieux*."

He awoke with a great shaking, took out an enormous watch and, scowling at the nuns, retired to his corner, where he began to mutter. The nuns took their seats and the pasty young women produced rosaries and suitable literature. Only Watch-chain was not at peace. No longer could he send his sardines to Spain. No longer would he be able to trade with the Spanish people. And why? The reason was not far to seek—it was because of the Jesuits! The nuns went on with their devotions, quite unmoved—Had not the Pope brought over the Moors to reintroduce the Inquisition?—Undoubtedly. The holy sisters might have been in the cells of the native convent. I felt a little sorry for Watch-chain. However, my attention was soon arrested by our entry into Carcassonne.

From the train this lovely old walled city still preserves its medieval appearance. The handiwork of its restorers is not apparent. Here it was that Watch-chain took his leave. Before doing so, however, he contrived to turn our compartment upside down in looking for a case which was above his head the whole

time. On finding it, he rummaged in its depths, drew out a paper bag and presented it to me.

"For myself, I cannot eat in the company of these corrupters of children—*Adieu et Bonne Chance, Mon Vieux!*"

He kissed the hand of his late consort and was gone.

The nuns looked much relieved: one crossed herself—no doubt a prayer for the sardine merchant's heretical soul.

I was surprised to see the body of workers who had journeyed with me from Paris leaving the train. I had felt certain that we should cross together at Cerbère. I checked up on the train; it was bound for Cerbère all right. The men were being marshalled by a man who resembled an N.C.O. in mufti, and to whom all gave the party salute. As the train drew out, I watched them marching quietly off the platform.

At our next stop the nuns left us. I was thankful; a rising tide of perspiration and garlic had become noticeable as the day grew hotter.

As I was carried nearer to Cerbère my stomach began to feel unpleasantly light. My few credentials seemed very inadequate, my automatic might be misinterpreted—already I saw possibilities of being arrested or, far worse, ignominiously packed off back to Paris with a pocket of useless pesetas.

My compartment was by now quite empty, Watch-chain's near conquest having left at the previous station. I was passing through some of the loveliest scenery. The line ran along the coast and I looked down on the blue-green of the sea with here and there a brilliantly painted fishing-boat tossing in the sun. The train passed through many tunnels and I had the impression of a series of Van Gogh paintings on a black wall. The occasional villages looked as sleepy in the noon sun as our own Kent hamlets. Civil war, violence and sudden death all seemed very remote. The automatic which I could feel in my kitbag seemed out of place—even ridiculous.

The train stopped with a jerk. Looking out, I saw two steel-helmeted soldiers complete with rifles and bayonets and accompanied by two *agents speciales* in plain clothes. They climbed aboard and we moved off again.

I took out my passport and slipped the gun behind the heating apparatus. They soon reached my compartment.

"Monsieur is crossing the border? It will be difficult; the frontier is now closed."

Without a glance at my luggage, he stamped my passport with a visa of the special police and passed on, followed by the uniformed escort who eyed me suspiciously.

This was a major catastrophe—the frontier closed!

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There was no time for self-pity however; the train was running into Cerbère. I retrieved my automatic with mixed feelings.

Cerbère, like Carcassonne, can look enchanting from a passing train. The station on the side of the hill looks down on the harbour and the few houses which form the front. Rising steeply above us was the natural barrier of the Pyrenees. Never before had they seemed so formidable. Within a few minutes of moving off again, we entered the blackness of the International Tunnel.

No Lack of Martyrs

MY first impression of the new Spain was a very white church. From its tower flew an unexpected flag. It was not the orthodox republican tricolour, nor was it the red banner of Moscow which the *Daily Mail* had led me to expect. Diagonally divided, half red, half black, the Anarchist emblem was new to me. Geographically, Port Bou is only two miles away from Cerbère, the tunnel scarcely longer than that through which Alice tumbled into her mad new world, the contrasts as acute.

The train stopped for the last time. I alighted. All my misgivings about the actual existence of the war soon went. Every person in sight was armed, and with every conceivable type of weapon. One comrade had a red and black scarf round his head and looked the complete stage pirate. His expression was stubbornly ferocious; he carried an effective looking Winchester, a hen apparently living suspended by its feet hung from his other hand. Shot-guns, horse pistols, old bayonets and even rep hooks were carried by other *compañeros*. The trains themselves had

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undergone a transformation—C.N.T. and U.G.T. in huge white letters decorated the engines. The carriage sides had been repainted with graphic illustrations: Swastika-covered planes rained down bombs on red crosses; more pleasing was a plump priest firing a shower of crosses from a blunderbuss, behind him a Moor brandished a cross in place of a sword. The artists were fighting with their own ammunition—paint.

I was not kept waiting on the platform for long; a guard led me through into the customs. All my books were carefully examined by a studious-looking youth; my newspapers were confiscated, even *l'Humanité* was proscribed. My automatic brought no comment. I was now feeling very hopeful—the Barcelona express was waiting through the barrier. I packed my things and made for the waiting train—only a few yards to go. The young man hailed me: "Just a moment, have you a passport from the committee?"

Hopefully, I produced my passport, my card from the N.U.J., and a letter from a labour M.P. The young man remained unimpressed. "It is necessary to see the committee; without their stamp you cannot pass."

He directed me to the headquarters of the local Popular Front in the village. Four armed men met me when I arrived at the converted café which acted

as committee headquarters. I was not kept waiting long. An efficient-looking guard led me to an inner room and to the committee. Three men sat at a large table. Piles of papers were before them; these they stamped, passing them from one to the other so that each was stamped three times. They seemed completely engrossed in their occupation and looked at me with displeasure. Each member of the trio was distinctive in appearance. The first typified my conception of an Anarchist; he wore a tight-fitting black suit, a high white collar and black tie. This accentuated his natural pallor. His hair was neutral and stood straight on end.

The second man was dressed in light overalls and carried an automatic strapped to his side. Good looking, almost to a fault, his whole manner was dictatorial; he seemed very pleased with the world. The third was typical of many of the Spanish trades union officials I had met in Spain. Round, fat, with an easy smile, he lacked the self-conscious pomposity of his British counterpart.

The *typical Anarchist*, who turned out to be the Republican member, shot out a series of questions without stopping for a moment in his stamping.

"Nationality?"

"British."

"What are you doing here?"

"I am a journalist and here for my work."

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"What political organization do you belong to?"

"No party, but my sympathies are on the left wing." I showed him my union card and other papers; he seemed even less impressed than the young man in the customs had been. He even sniggered at my labour M.P.'s letter: "We are very indebted to your labour party for their comradely help in Spain. We want guns, not men—we have no lack of martyrs!"

This was worse than ever. As a last card I produced my parabellum. I had the intention of pointing out to the committee that I was ready to fight and if necessary die for the Republic. I certainly made an impression. The good-looking young man dropped the rubber stamp, in its place an automatic appeared. The portly trade unionist grabbed a shot-gun; only the Republican remained unmoved. I dropped the gun and held my hands up—very high.

The Republican reached over for my gun, it was unloaded and he kept it in front of him.

"Return in two hours, we will consider your case—we will look after your passport."

I walked up to the station restaurant. On the way from the harbour I noticed a large shell-hole in one of the houses—a souvenir of an attempted landing by the Fascists. The people I saw seemed friendly enough. Life proceeded in a normal way. A small

market was crowded with women bargaining for black grapes, pimentos, potatoes and pomegranates. Brown laughing urchins ran between the shopping women. The sun beat down on the white houses; the easy flow of life was a pleasant drug—troubles were soon forgotten. I found a pleasant, quiet café with a few tables set in the cool dark shadow. Inside were more tables and behind them huge wine casks. I sat down and ordered a glass of manzanilla.

I was trying to take some stock of the situation, when one of the overalled militia came over and sat at my table. "You English? Knew you was a limey foist time—my name's Brunelli, Bruno Brunelli. Have a drink?" I was glad to hear a Christian tongue. He ordered two more manzanillas.

"I was in de wobblies in de American seamen's union. I seen every longshore strike on the Atlantic coast. Cops knew me O.K., they ran me out just before de bust up here; I been down the Granada front with de Anarchists there, good boys! What you here for, hikin'?"

"Hardly. I came out here to help in this war."

Bruno was not impressed. "We get a lot of guys try to come over—Christ, we got no guns; can't fight this war with bows and arrers. De Fascists got guns O.K., getting 'em all the time from Hitler and Mussolini and de Portuguese bastards. We got to use our own dinamite."

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"Isn't that a good thing—dinamite?"

"Hell, no! It makes great bluff bombs, but even if a stick was to go off here it wouldn't no more than push out deez winders."

"Do you lose many men?"

"Christ, I'll say! In de foist attack two was killed right next to me. De trouble is half de silly bastards won't keep their heads down, think their gonna ruch out and clean up the Fascists at one go—instead, they gets de woiks."

I made a mental note about the keeping down.

"I guess the committee might let you through." Bruno finished his drink. "Anyways, if they don't it's just too bad—drinks are on me." He insisted on paying, he gave the general *Salud* and wandered off. I lunched at the station and lunched very well indeed. Paella was followed by soup and an excellent salad. After the meal, I walked slowly back to the committee. A guard at the door gave me my passport; inside it was a typed slip headed *Salvo Conducto*. Life took on a rosy glow—not for long: the destination was not Barcelona, it was Cerbère!

No! I could not see the committee, it was an important meeting. The guard was sorry, it was impossible. No use to argue. I sat down on the beach to think. The mountains looked incredibly high; both behind and in front, the peaks rose dark and massive even in the brilliant sun. There could be

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no point in returning to France, why not cross the mountains and reach the nearest railway-station?

I bought some food and fruit in the small main street and set off taking the opposite path to the one marked FRANCIA. Soon I was out of sight of Port Bou—the time was about seven and after a quick meal I walked on. Suddenly, turning a bend, I faced a small stone shelter; from it emerged a very rough looking Catalan with a rifle.

"*Alto—donde?*" I produced my passport and the slip from the committee. "Hombre! this is not the way for Cerbère." He led me to the end of the path and pointed to where another path led to mountains I had just crossed. I had no spirit to argue. I thanked him and moved off down the path he showed me. Eventually, I reached a motor road. It was quite dark; the moon was still unrisen. Suddenly I saw the lights of Cerbère below me in the valley and was glad to be in sight of a bed and food.

Cerbère has one hotel; other bug-ridden edifices receive guests, but I was warned against them by a kindly gendarme. I slept well after the train journey and the events of the last twenty-four hours. I could have slept in a hen-roost. I paid my bill in pesetas. The hotel proprietor was not over-pleased, he gave me a ruinous rate in francs. No time could be wasted, I dashed off two letters to friends with a reputed left-wing influence. As a chance shot, I sent a wire to an

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uncle in Paris holding an important ministerial post. As I had not heard a word from him for over five years, it was a trifle optimistic.

Leaving my haversack at the hotel, I set out to climb the mountains I had crossed overnight. It was hard to feel depressed in the warm sun and the fresh sea air, the rain and cold of the English summer were far away. Half-way up, I stopped for lunch—grapes, ripe Camembert cheese and crisp bread. The sun drew out the smell of wild thyme. I stripped off shirt and vest and felt the warm coarse grass against my back. A herd of goats passed below and I saw their keeper watching me. He passed on. A little later I heard a high-pitched whistle. Coming up the path below I noticed another man in fisherman's clothes. He left the path and began climbing to where I was lying. In a few minutes, he had joined me. He was obviously a fisherman from the town. We exchanged pleasantries.

"Monsieur is on his holidays? Such good weather too."

We talked a little of the fishing and the bad state of the market. Suddenly he changed the conversation. "Here it is a bad place to be, it is too near to the war, you had better move round to the other side away from the sea." His tone was pleasant but firm. So much for my summer idyll. As we moved off, I suddenly saw the reason of his concern for my safety.

Below in a small valley there were a crowd of about fifty men, obviously being drilled by two others who stood apart.

"Is this what I must fear, my own comrades?" I asked my guide. He looked surprised and annoyed. "Have you your party card?"

I showed him my union card. This time it worked. "Alas, we have so many spies, one cannot be too cautious."

I explained my difficulties with the Port Bou committee.

"It is not easy, as the Anarchists control the frontier, but Monsieur le Maire may help you. In the town they will give you his address."

I slipped on my clothes and hurried down to the village.

The waiter at the café directed me to the mayor's house. Through a low tunnel under the railway, which looked and smelled like a sewer, I reached the main street. Now in summer, Cerbère's main thoroughfare was a dry and dusty cattle track. Disused bicycle frames, empty cans and an occasional dead cat lay waiting for the winter rains to wash them away. The few shops were indistinguishable; the windows appeared full of lethargic flies. The street was deserted save for a small boy with his trousers lowered, relieving nature in the road.

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its neighbours. I climbed a small flight of stairs. An attractive young woman, the first I had seen in Cerbère, showed me in to the mayor. I explained my case over a glass of cognac. He was sympathetic, but hardly helpful.

"So you have come to fight against Fascism, good! an excellent spirit, I salute you." He filled my glass. "Alas, you have no pass from the popular front." I explained to him what the popular front in Britain comprised.

"Here, in la belle France, we would not tolerate such people as your Bevin and your Citrine, pouf! we would kick them out." I did not attempt to explain to him the difficulty of such a course, however worthy it might appear.

"Then you have your Communist party card?" Again I tried the N.U.J., it failed.

"Go home, *mon brave*, you must open the eyes of your fellow-workers to the iniquities of their leaders. It is as important a task as any you can perform in Spain." He politely said *au revoir* and I was shown out into the street once more. It was now dusk, but the street looked even more sordid. From the houses came the smell of cheap cooking-oil and garlic blended with a variety of other stench, all unpleasant; I could almost see the unwashed greasy plates and saucepans unscoured for days. I had no thought for food after that.

I walked down to the bistro and had more cognac; nothing mattered now. From there I walked away from the town, up the white road that led to the cliffs and to Spain. Before I reached the bend by the little cemetery, the moon came out—it was full and heavy. I reached the bend where the road curves out and over the sea. Below me I could see the waves washing monotonously. I left the road and sat among the rocks at the edge of the cliff. In front, silvered moonlight streaked the cliffs of the Costa Brava; a patrol-boat, far away, chugged along the coast. I watched until it became unbearable—the anticlimax, the futility of my journey, Monsieur le Maire's cognac, it was all too much for me, I lay down and sobbed.

I awoke to find myself still on the cliff. I was cold and stiff, it was almost morning. To warm myself, I set off up the mountainside. Soon the whole sky changed from a pale grey to warm gold. I watched the sun rise over the Spanish cliffs and felt better—optimism is the hardest of emotional annuals. I was hungry now and set off down the goat track for the town. Hot coffee and fresh brioches completed the moral revival. I decided to take another chance while the mood was fresh upon me. At the station I booked to Port Bou, two francs. The scene was unchanged—again the bandits, the class-conscious train

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and the studious young man at the barrier. At the committee-rooms I was told to wait in the outer office. I was not alone for long; two women sat themselves on the bench opposite. One tall, very good-looking in a masculine way, dressed in a well-cut flannel costume; the other seemed familiar, slight with a nervous intelligent face. Spectacles added to my impression that she was a school-teacher I had once known.

"English?" said the tall one. Her tone was almost accusative. The mutual suspicion that one feels towards one's countrymen soon disappeared as we compared difficulties. The vaguely familiar person introduced herself as Sylvia Townsend Warner, she and her friend were attempting to join the medical unit in Barcelona.

We had been chatting a while when Bruno reappeared.

"They ain't let you through yet, Jeeze! That's bad, come and 'ave a drink with Bruno." We followed him to a café on the sea front, sat down and ordered our drinks. We had quite a number. Bruno grew more expansive.

"It's just too bad about youse all stuck here, I try to fix something. It ain't easy—not if you was Largo Caballero 'imself."

We parted. Bruno left for the committee, the two women drove back to Cerbère and I went down to

the beach for a swim. We were all to meet again at four.

No one was waiting when I returned to the committee-rooms at four. A civil guard beckoned me into the inner office. Here the Anarchist handed me a slip, shook hands and bade me *salud*. I could scarcely wait until I was outside the office. This time the destination mark was not Cerbère—it was Barcelona!

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C H A P T E R T H R E E

"You're in the Army Now"

IN a few minutes I was past the young man and the barrier, on the train and under way to Barcelona. It was hard to believe that the awful waiting was over. Once through the Pyrenees, things felt real enough. The scenery was not unlike that I had watched between Narbonne and Cerbère. The wild broken coast-line was the same. In places the rocks dropped sharply to the blue sea; in others small coves and bays with sandy beaches promised sunny holidays. It was in the villages that one noticed the change. Squads of men were drilling in dusty village squares. An occasional barricade hastily thrown up in the early July days had since been made solid with the slogan *No Pasarán*. We passed through olive groves with their sombre green colouring, the whole countryside was wooded with cork-trees and pines; all were small and stunted: Spain is poor in timber. Vineyards in plenty, in which the peasants were busy gathering the harvest. They would stop as we passed to give the clenched fist *salud*. From factory chimneys and farm-houses the red and black flags were flying.

As we neared Barcelona, the setting sun brought out the wonderful reds, blues and greys of the land.

It was after nine when we arrived in the Estación Francia. I was pushed to one side while the peasants and townspeople were herded through the barrier. I waited as I had been told. With me were about fifty other men, mostly French, with about a dozen Germans. They had travelled in a special coach from Cerbère.

"Are ye English now?"

I looked and saw a pleasant red-faced man. He looked a little confused with his surroundings.

"Me name is Bill Scott and oi'm from the I.R.A."

I introduced myself and shook hands. We had little time for further confidences; two armed soldiers led us into a brilliantly lit waiting-room. We were grouped into our nationalities. Bill and I comprised the British section. Our names and general particulars were taken once more. Bill's insistence that he was *not* British caused a little confusion. He was pacified only by being assured that the arbitrary grouping was very temporary and entailed no loss of Irish independence.

We split into two groups. The first, including Bill and myself, were instructed to leave for the Hotel Colón. The second, which comprised the Germans and a few of the French, all military specialists, was

to retrain at once for Valencia *en route* for Toledo where the Alcázar was still holding out.

The Hotel Colón was a blaze of light. From the Plaza Cataluña came the blare of loud-speakers; military bands and political addresses boomed out over the roar of klaxon horns. Cars decorated with significant initials rushed round the square in a mad merry-go-round way. Kiosks and hoardings were vivid splashes of colour; posters urged Catalans to enlist at once; the results of Fascism were clearly and strikingly shown. The commercial artists were fighting their own war; theirs the most effective of weapons—propaganda.

At the entrance of the hotel was a machine-gun post with steel-helmeted guards, far more efficient-looking than any we had so far seen. We were shown to the reception-hall and our kit dumped in a corner. It was a little confusing, uniformed troops, militiamen and extremely attractive looking militia girls carrying automatics or rifles, all coming and going at a great rate. We were joined by a staff officer.

"First you must eat, then we shall find you all billets." He led us into a huge dining-hall, already nearly full of troops and officers. All wore badges or caps with the lettering U.G.T., P.S.U. or J.S.U. White-aproned waiters served our food from huge dishes. Lentil soup, well cooked, was followed by meat, potatoes and gravy. Wine was served with the

meal and fruit finished it. Officers, identified by wearing two or three stars and a colour stripe, sat with their men. This last was at variance with my own O.T.C. knowledge of military etiquette. Our meal over, the hall was emptied and places relaid for the next draft.

In the hall our officer was waiting. We were led upstairs to a room marked: *Département des Étrangers*. Here we underwent an investigation more rigorous and thorough than any before. The proceedings opened with the very direct question: "Why are you here?"

"To fight Fascism."

My inquisitor was very shrewd and unemotional. I felt him weighing me up. "Here we do not fight Fascism by reading the *New Statesman and Nation* or attending advanced cocktail-parties."

"Is orthodox Communism an essential of military efficiency?" I was annoyed.

"That will be all. You must not allow yourself to be easily moved; *that* is an essential of military efficiency. Wait in the hall; you will receive your hotel pass for the night."

The next morning we arrived, as instructed, at the Colón once more. Cars still tore through the streets, but the loud-speakers were silent. People sat in the sunshine of the Plaza. Life seemed much saner, the tempo more bearable than the night before; even

the machine-gun looked less sinister as we entered the hotel. We sat down in the entrance-hall to wait. We had been there for about an hour, when I noticed a figure even more extraordinary than those we had been watching pass through the revolving glass doors. His dress resembled that of a plainsman in the eighties: loose baggy trousers, sandals, a tunic with an open V neck loosely laced, a bright red handkerchief worn as a scarf; for headgear he wore a wide Córdoba hat; at his waist an immense automatic pistol. He was amazingly ugly and had all the assurance of a prosperous bookmaker. He looked around the hall and walked straight over to where we sat.

"Hello boys! you come to join the English Centooria, that's great. We got twelve now. We gonna have an all English centooria before long. Where the hell's that fella Avner?"

Without another word to us, he disappeared back through the glass doors. He returned in a few minutes arguing loudly with a tall youth dressed in blue overalls.

"You got to remember we're in a state of civil war, yes? You got no bizness to go off and 'ave a coffee, it's against revolutionary discipline, nice example for the noo comrades, yes?"

The long one looked very aggrieved.

"Comrade Levy—the official regulations allow for breakfast at eight." He turned to us. "Is that right

comrades or not? I've been up since seven and not had a bite, it's bad for the morale."

"You talk too much. Course you can have breakfast—we're all going to, these noo comrades 'ere want some, don't they?" Comrade Levy clinched the argument by leading us all out to a café on the square. I had more opportunity to watch him as we ate through a mound of brioche. He radiated energy; he was never still for one moment or silent for that matter. His eyes were very green and kept moving as though eager to escape from their natural moorings. He was very broad, though not over tall.

"You boys 'ave 'erd of me? What are the papers saying about me now?" We had no information, he seemed disappointed.

Avner put in a suggestion. "The comrades should be instructed on the political situation."

Levy seemed to regard this as an incursion on his own territory. "Oos political delegate to the Tom Mann Centooria? You or me?"

There was another discussion longer than the first and even more pointless. This too, Comrade Levy ended in his masterly fashion by telling his opponent to "shut up". Avner seemed quite unruffled. Bill and I looked at one another.

"You boys better come up to barracks right away."

Our barracks were about three miles out of Barcelona, at a village called Sarriá. During the journey

Comrade Levy kept an unbroken silence; a Trappist would have found him rather unsociable. Sid Avner was the opposite, he proved a mine of information on the most unlikely topics. The official figures for venereal disease, the amount of rice needed to feed Cataluña, the local tax on German sewing-machines or a specific against scabies—all seemed an open book to him. He looked round occasionally at Levy, half expecting to have his assertions challenged, but that sceptic was far away.

We alighted in a village square. We were half-way up the mountain outside Barcelona that is topped by Tibidabo. In the square, the church showed signs of recent fighting. A shell had smashed a hole through its tower, a black hollow yawned where the gates had once been, white patches showed sharply against the old grey stone. Here the Fascists had stored their arms. On the day of the revolt it had taken a light field-gun to dislodge them from their machine-gun nest in the tower. The Priest had been found dead among the defenders.

"Oh, be Jaysus!" said Bill. "There's many would like the sight o' that in Dublin."

We had little time to examine the building. Levy did everything at a great pace. Soon we were almost at our convent-barracks. The convent of the Sacred Heart, which once housed the daughters of the well-to-do devout, had undergone a change. Over its high

white walls, I could see the waving tops of palms. The building was typically Spanish from the rounded clock tower, topped by a red flag, to the barred windows in sharp relief against the white walls. The red-tiled roof gave a blend of warmth to the white and green. In front was Tibidabo stretching right up to the skyline. Behind, lay Barcelona and the sea. Grey destroyers lying off the harbour like toy boats in a sunny pond were a reminder of the true situation.

At the gate, we were challenged by a sentry who emerged from a confessional-box which had been pressed in this new office. Levy spoke to him in Spanish, and we were passed inside. We were taken up to a dormitory on the top floor. In the courtyard were about two hundred troops, mostly Spanish, resting after drill. A few were in the corridors with brushes or mops and pails. We were introduced to our comrades in arms of the Tom Mann Centuria. My first impressions, in almost every case, later proved quite wrong. We were seven, including Comrade Levy, the other English being quartered in the bug-ridden Jaime I barracks in the town.

They were a typically English group: a squat young Highlander Jock with three years' training in the Black Watch behind him: "Am f . . . g glad to see ye." Lorrimer Birch, a Byronesque young man, saluted us. He had left a scientist's life for practical politics. For him, Communism was the beginning

and the end of his whole existence. A little unbalanced, he was a party man first and last and had all the faults and virtues of the orthodox Marxian.

David Marshall had come from Lancashire. He had discovered an existence even less bearable than being *on* the Dole, he had been *of* the Dole. In a small Lancashire town, he had been an assistant supervisor at the local exchange. For him, the men signing on week in, week out, their changing attitude as months went on from a humorous defiance to hard bitterness and finally to an abject acceptance, was too much. The sordid, petty officialdom of the municipal service sickened him; he was something of a poet. When his leave arrived, instead of buying the usual ticket to St. Anne's, he drew out his savings and booked to Barcelona.

Ray Cox was an enthusiast and remained one to the end. For most of us, grumbling was a welcome outlet. Ray's optimism never allowed a murmur. Our beans might be cold, our boots too small, our meagre pay a week late—things were always "fine". An office clerk and a party member, he was a personal plea for the un-Marxian doctrine of mind over matter.

"This afternoon we have a political address for the benefit of the new comrades, yes? The non-party members may attend." With that Levy disappeared, leaving us alone together.

Birch led us down to the *intendencia*, where we were fitted out in khaki uniforms, boots, caps, shirts and underwear. All these, I was surprised to see, were stamped "Burgos"—we were dressed from head to toe in the official Spanish army uniform. The others handed in their old overalls and tunics and received the new issue in their place. After a lunch in the large dining-room, we returned upstairs for our political address. For over an hour we waited—no sign of our leader. Sid grew impatient: "He's too busy in the Hotel Lloret to ever get back to barracks." Birch looked annoyed: "Don't criticize your political leaders in public, wait for the cell meeting to-night. There are non-party members present!" This was apparently meant for me.

"If the comrades agree, I shall give a short analysis of the political situation here in Spain."

After an hour's address, the significance of all those mysterious initials which decorated cars, trams, flags, which were worn as badges, or scribbled on urinal walls, became clear to me. First in numbers and in importance came the C.N.T. All buses, trams and, paradoxically enough, the taxis carried these initials representing the National Confederation of Workers, the revolutionary syndicalist trades union.

This was dominated, politically, by the F.A.I. This Anarchist party, numerically small, controlled the huge C.N.T. unions. We were to beware of both the

C.N.T. and F.A.I.; despite a so-called united front, they still persisted in an old habit of shooting up their rival trade union leaders of the U.G.T., which corresponds closely with our own T.U.C. It cannot be suggested, however, that this body was either corrupt or reactionary. With it had merged the Communist party.

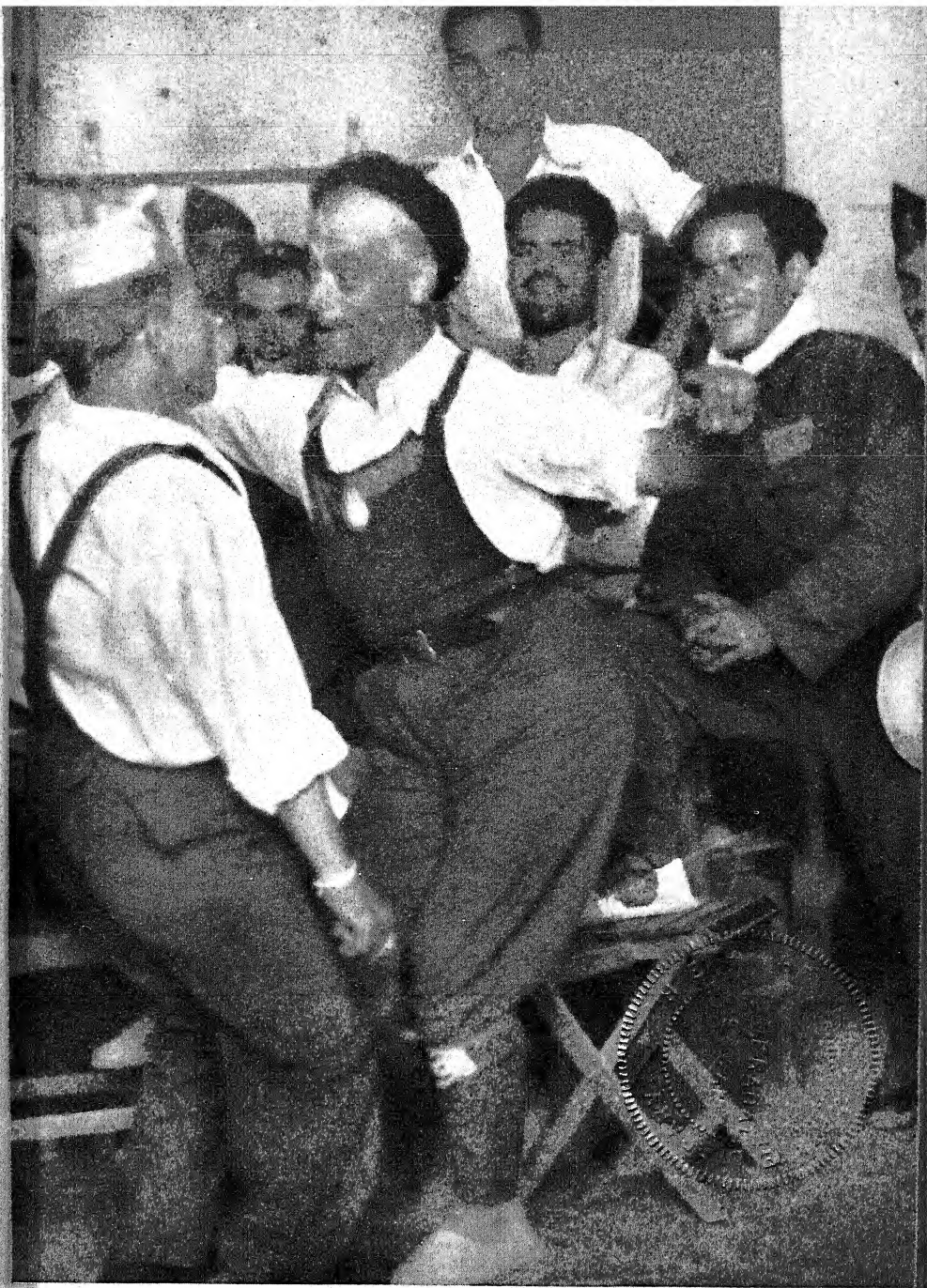
The P.O.U.M. was an independent Communist organization similar to the Independent Labour Party in Britain, small in membership, but aggressive and dramatic in its publicity methods. All three, C.N.T., F.A.I. and P.O.U.M., should be shunned, the last was particularly undesirable as being, according to Birch, under Trotskyite leadership. Not a very cheerful picture of the United Front in action. The rest of the anti-Fascist Front was formed of Republicans and Left Republicans.

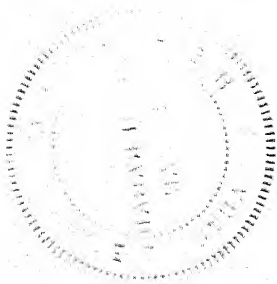
The address over, Bill and I decided a visit to Barcelona would be agreeable. Our official hours were from six in the morning until four in the afternoon. We were free between four and ten at night. Later than ten, no soldier was allowed on streets without an official permit. Three hundred pesetas were burning a hole in my pocket. Bill called me aside. "The boys've not a penny piece between them. We ought to be asking them round to the pub for a drink." This seemed a good idea both from the point of making a favourable impression and getting to know our

comrades. They all seemed to agree and we went down to the village café in the square.

It soon filled with Catalan troops; all were quite young, few were above twenty-five. The English were popular. The Catalans vied with each other for the honour of buying drinks for *Los Ingleses*. Sid, whose appetite seemed insatiable, ate his way through a pile of pastries. Jock had elaborated a blend of pigeon English and miming; this exhibition delighted the Catalans without their understanding a word of it. One of them produced a guitar, he played a few bars—there was silence, then his companions took up the strange rhythm of the *canto flamenco*. For me it will always be the most fascinating, the most moving of music. Strong, barbaric and brutally intense, the song would change to a long-drawn wavering sobbing note which drew an enthusiastic “*olé*” from the crowd.

Jock was a *flamenco* enthusiast. When the song was ended, he leant over to me: “That’s f . . . g guid, its o’er like the pipes a’ home!” Our entertainment ended with Jock giving the *International* on his mouth-organ. We were all much more at our ease when we returned; even Birch seemed quite human. Guards were set for the night, each centuria had to provide a certain number to patrol the wide grounds. This vigilance seemed a little excessive at the time, later I understood how necessary it was. After dinner,





we returned to our dormitory. Marx and Lenin had displaced Mary and Loyola as mural decorations. The mattresses were clean and comfortable. From the windows I watched the palms in the moonlight and in the farther distance, the lights of Barcelona.

The bugle sounded for lights out. Birch and Jock went down to take their guard. The same bugle awakened us at six the next morning. Bill and I joined David in an early-morning swim in a pool in the grounds, the official wash-house was always full at that hour. The pool was hidden by a clump of trees on the far side of the grounds. After a short swim in the icy water, on our way back Marshall showed us the nuns' cemetery. The entrance was a door in the wall and through it I could see the niches in which the dead nuns were placed. Some were empty, others had been burst open.

The tombs in some of the churches had been used as depositories for hidden arms by the Fascists, or as hiding-places for money and jewels. The searchers in the convent had found neither, but Marshall showed me a number of tiny brown shrivelled bodies no bigger than small monkeys in one of the niches. These 'babies' bodies, found in a nuns' cemetery, had been photographed as excellent anti-clerical propaganda by the Anarchists. Another find which had been made much of was a large quantity of French Letters kept in the Mother Superior's study. These had been

distributed among the troops. The pathetic occupants of the niche in the cemetery wall were hardly a recommendation for their efficacy. Many were the scandalous stories one heard; of most I remained sceptical.

Drill, marching and arms instruction filled the morning; after lunch we took our siesta. Even the Germans could not supplant this habit in the Spaniards—Irun was taken largely owing to the occupants of an important outpost seeking a more shady spot for their afternoon nap.

After our siesta, we were formed up with the French Centuria for manœuvres. For almost an hour we sat on the mountainside while our section leaders planned an imaginary attack on the observatory at the summit. Each of the four section leaders had his own ideas, they eventually elected a German N.C.O., who had three years' war experience, to lead the attack in the morning. We marched back in good order.

"Jaysus, wot a warr!" was Bill's comment, "it's more loiike Oirland every day."

When we reached our quarters, we found our political leader waiting for us. With him was a small live-eyed young woman dressed in trousers and tunic, which gave her a shapeless appearance. Her features were regular without her being actually pretty. Nat did the honours.

"Ramona, meet two noo comrades—Bill Scott and Scott Watson." The lady in trousers saluted.

"Maybe we go to the front soon?" was her only comment.

"Ramona's not happy unless she's killin' Fascists," explained Nat with the modest pride in his young amazon. "We was together in Majorca, did some real fighting there—eh, sweetie!" Ramona did not reply, she disappeared into a curtained-off recess at the end of the room. I explained to our political leader that we wished to visit Barcelona that evening. He did not seem too pleased. "It's a very risky thing with all these Anarchists about, still you go where you want, I'm just warning you. You got some cash? We always share out what we got—all real Communists, see?"

I looked at Bill, he winked, he had taken an instinctive dislike to our political leader. "We've not enough to be worth the sharin' of it, Oi thought we'd be gettin' a few nicisseties loike."

Later, when we were on the tram for the town, Bill gave his views: "Oi'd not be sharin' with the loikes of him, Oi'm as good a Communist as any man but Oi doan't loike Levy."

The city was as noisy as the night on which we entered it for the first time, but a little less confusing. We left our tram at the top of the Ramblas and walked down the world-famous street. Everywhere were hawkers selling badges and colours of the various

parties; along the broad footway which ran down the centre of the avenue, the men and women paraded. Lining the path on either side of the road were brilliantly-lit cafés and hotels. Customers sat at tables sipping coffee or liqueurs and watching the crowds which passed up and down.

In addition to the apparently stable industry of political badges and caps, stalls bright with propaganda posters sold every type of publication—pious or pornographic. Half-way down, stalls were filled with flowers and—a grim reminder—with wreaths in abundance. We found a street off the Ramblas which looked most exciting: chickens on spits roasted outside a tavern. Here we decided to eat our meal. We went into a vast open kitchen roofed with ancient beams, blackened by centuries of good cooking; from them hung hams and bunches of seasoning. The cooking range ran the whole length of the kitchen; on it a wonderful variety of dishes were cooking, tended by white overalled cooks like priests carrying out a complicated ritual. We chose our meal and went into another low-ceilinged room lined with huge wine-casks and sat at a table. From our room, twisted staircases led to the private rooms upstairs. Here, in the old days, successful toreros had taken their ladies, Don Juans their latest beauties, and in recent times Americans their dollars. All was changed—soldiers and artisans with their wives were our fellow-diners.

As we sat eating the best of all Spanish dishes—Paella—and drinking our sweet red Valdepeñas which is so heady, we heard for the first time a Spanish street organ. They are far grander than anything known in London or Paris. They possess a multitude of effects, bells, canaries and drums. This one played through wild exciting Catalan airs, finishing with the Anarchist anthem and the *International*, the latter almost unrecognizable in a lilting tango rhythm.

As we sipped our liqueurs, we heard the opening notes of a mandoline, the diners round us grew quiet; a slight pale man with a cigarette hanging from his lips began to play. In its tinkling melodious rhythm, it was as moving as had been the wild tunes of the street organ. As he finished, I heard the “*Olé! Olé!*” of those around us. Seated half in the shadow, I suddenly noticed a young woman; even by Catalan standards she must have been a beauty. Bill had his back to her, he was very happy. I smiled at the young woman, she smiled back in a pleasant natural way, it was free from the coquettish self-consciousness which one expects from a chance acquaintance in London.

“Your honour likes his music?” she addressed me with the polite *usted*.

“Yes, he plays from his heart. Will the señorita take wine with us?” Bill looked a little distressed: “It’s a duel you’ll be having us foighting, she’ll be

keeping company with the general or something of that."

While Bill was speaking, the young woman had moved over to our table. "I am no señorita, I am a good *camarada*, soon I shall fight on the Huesca front. You are Germans?"

I told her I was English and that Bill was Irish.

"Hombre! Irlandés—*bueno*, me a Catalanian, we have much sympathy with your country, for centuries we have fought for our freedom from the rest of Spain. Why should we work to keep the fat long-skirts (Priests) and aristocrats all over Spain? Here in Cataluña we all work, we have thrown out the Fascists and the capitalists for good. Ireland is independent, we too must be free of Madrid."

The young woman, whose name I discovered to be Rosita, like most Catalans was a passionate advocate of independence and separation from the Madrid government. In the 1934 revolt, the Catalans had declared an autonomous state with Luis Companys as President. Their republic was short-lived; the fleet decided the issue by remaining loyal to the reactionary Leroux government in Madrid. At the moment when Companys and the Catalan nationalists began their celebration banquet at the town hall, a shell from a loyal cruiser hit the building.

The revolt was premature. The Catalans surrendered. Companys broadcast an appeal to all his

supporters to pile their arms in the streets to be collected by the civil guards. This his supporters, mostly dutiful bourgeoisie, did. Everyone had neglected to consider the Anarchists; with admirable dispatch they hurried out into the streets and collected the neatly-piled arms before the civil guards reached them. The rifles, pistols and shot-guns were now doing service at the Aragon front.

Our waiter brought the bill, it was extremely reasonable, I passed over an extra peseta as a tip.

"No, señor, you have given too much," he handed me back the tip. It was the first time in my life this had occurred to me. Waiters were now paid a union rate, tipping was forbidden. Rosita insisted on paying her own bill. We left together and strolled through the narrow, crowded streets leading to the docks. We found a café and sat down for a final coffee.

Life seemed very happy and carefree. Swarthy militiamen back from the front sat with their women. In a near-by street, the wild barrel organ could be heard. By the door a well-built Spaniard, in civilian clothes, sat drinking with two companions.

"Oi've no wonder Nat Levy was against us seeing the soights of th'city," said Bill, "danger indadel 'tis safer Oi feel than iver Oi did in Dublin."

Crack—crack, without warning two shots rang out—the large Spaniard by the door lolled over his table;

a red stream, thicker than wine, spread in little rivulets over the marble table-top.

For two minutes, there was panic, the shot man's two friends drew automatics and rushed into the street; some of the drinkers ducked under the tables; others sat unmoved. Rosita looked a little pale. It was all so unexpected, so unreal—the street organ, nearer now, was crashing out the Anarchist anthem. Two waiters carried the body out to a police-car that had arrived. One came back to wipe the table-top and throw sand over the red patches on the floor. Bill was shaken.

"Oi've seen men killed before me eyes, Oi've done a bit of killin' meself in th'trouble, but Oi've never seen the loike o'that."

I ordered three large cognacs. Rosita was quite recovered. "*Muy malo!* It is not important, perhaps he was a Fascist or perhaps the F.A.I. did not like him." Life in the café was normal again, fresh drinks were ordered, militiamen continued to pay amorous and outrageous compliments to their women. Bill and I had no mind to stay on.

"You must go so soon?" Rosita seemed disappointed.

"Alas! we must be in our cuartel by ten."

"To-morrow we must meet again, you must not leave so early. Lazzaro is to sing in *Aida*. You who like music so much must hear him."

We took our leave of Rosita and arranged a meeting the next day. "*Hasta mañana!* Café Ramblas at five o'clock."

We had to run from the tram-stop to the barracks to get inside by ten. We agreed not to mention our shooting party. When we arrived in the dormitory, Birch was setting the guard. Long Sid and myself were put on from eleven until two. We chatted and played poker until eleven arrived. Sid munched a huge sandwich he had commandeered from the kitchen. Jock was scathing—Sid's length and appetite were a source of ribald comment. "To think ye'd seduce a wee bit of a girrl in the kitchen to feed yer big ugly belly, it's f . . . g disgusting." Sid would not be drawn—he ate on stolidly. "It's no fair on the Government, tha canna keep both ye and yer tape worm—one of yous'll have to go." *Fields and Factories* flew past Jock's head.

"Enough of that, want to wake the barracks? Shut up Jock, you Sid—time you were on guard." Birch led us down to the guard-room. We were given each a loaded rifle and a long-hooded cloak against the cold night air. To any newcomer we must have looked like two enterprising monks seeking sisterly solace in the convent.

I was posted on the terrace overlooking the gardens. In the moonlight everything had a soft clearness, the tall palms moved in the slight breeze from

the sea; their rustle was no more than the swish of a woman's skirts. For a moment, I forgot the red splash on the table-top, I remembered the red of Rosita's mouth against her brown skin. Had she a *novio* away fighting? I must ask her to-morrow.

"*Alto!*" I recognized Sid's voice, again "*Alto!*"—then the crash of a rifle shot. The reserve guard turned out at the double. We soon reached Sidney. "There—I'm sure I got him," he pointed to a group of low wooden buildings. We crossed over to them. True enough Sid's aim had been deadly—in a wired-off enclosure we found a heap of bloody fur—it had once been a prize Angora rabbit.

C H A P T E R F O U R

Death and Doughnuts

THE three centurias, English, French and German, were drawn up in the deep valley at the foot of Tibidabo. Our object of attack was carefully explained—the observatory at the summit. Even by nine o'clock the sun was a little too hot for comfort. Barcelona in the valley was blurred with a warm mist. Our Political Leader was in command of our small group; plans were explained and it was arranged that we were to launch our attack from three sides. A whistle from our Commander and we had to fall flat. The defending force marched off to their position in the observatory. While we waited, we were once more given our instructions, mistakes would be treated as acts of indiscipline.

We were grouped with the Germans; the French, supplemented by a few Poles and Flemings, led the attack on one side, the Germans on the other. For hours with a sharply rising temperature we stalked our way through shrubs, thorns, rocky gullies and woodlands. We all fell dutifully to the sound of Nat Levy's whistle till finally we were a mass of scratches

and small cuts. I heard Bill's "Jaysus, wot a warr!" beside me in the bushes. Then I heard our Political Leader in heated argument with our German commander; Nat Levy agreed to differ, he had a plan of his own. Finally we found our little English group pursuing a lone course towards the top of the mountain. It had now become unbearably hot; I was soaked in sweat, my rough breeches rubbed my thighs until it became agony to move. Sid, in a pained whisper, reported a bad knee; still comrade Levy forged on. We were now preparing for the final assault—suddenly from both sides, burst our troops: the two attacking forces attacked one another while we were in the centre. The defenders had not left their position on the top of the mountain.

Everyone was very critical; we decided on an inquest to be held in the afternoon. We reversed our order and marched down again. Over on the right, almost hidden by trees, I noticed a large villa, partially destroyed by fire. I decided to explore it as soon as I had time.

The general meeting was held in the convent museum. Stuffed eagles stared with glassy eyes from their cases; a pouncing owl hovered in perpetual suspension over a petrified mouse; an enterprising propagandist had dressed a long dead ape in priestly robes, rescued from a school chapel; cases of fossils lined the walls. Notices urged the comrades to re-

spect the property, and, apart from the ordination of the ape, this had been done.

The museum soon filled and the meeting began. First, the Germans, then the French gave their versions of the morning's events. The German commander placed the responsibility on the British for having ignored orders. Levy at once jumped on to his feet and launched into a lengthy defence. The French agreed with the Germans: "The English 'ave no deescepleene." Birch caught the chairman's eye. To our amazement, he began a bald-headed attack on our Political Commandant. As he spoke in French, Levy could not follow him literally, but gathered the gist of what was said. "A man who follows his own ego at such a time is guilty of treason against the revolution, he would not scruple in the field to endanger the life of his men."

I looked round to watch the effect of this on the other English in the group. I noticed no one showing great disapproval at Birch's unexpected attack. The meeting closed, it being arranged that a re-election of officers should be held the next day—our army was nothing if not democratic. I began to take the war less and less seriously. When we left the museum, Levy took Bill and me aside: "I want you boys to do a little job for the Centooria—mustn't take too much notice of what you heard this afternoon, it's easy to criticize, yes? We must be on the lookout for

disrupted elements, we're in a state of civil war, yes? We've seen what Trotzkyism can do in Soviet Russia. I want you boys to take a new recruit from Barcelona, you don't 'ave to hurry back, get a bit of dinner first." He pressed five pesetas in our hands. "I'd go, but I got a job of work—confidential. Ramona'll go into town with you, you can get away now; be at the Colón at four-thirty." He was gone.

I turned to Bill: "That's finished our date for to-night."

"It cannot be helped, we've our orders to obey, but we've our Political Leader's permission to be out for a while."

When we got up to the dormitory, we found the boys in excellent mood: Nat had just paid them fifteen pesetas each—general permission was given to stay in Barcelona for the evening. Nat was a diplomat. Ramona joined us at the gates. "I don't think I go to Barcelona. You boys will find a new comrade at the Colón, his name is Mulligan." Bill was cheered: "That's a good Oirish name, I'll be glad to meet him." I was thinking of my appointment with the dark-eyed *miliciiana*.

We found the new recruit waiting in the same hall where we had just met our leader. To Bill's disappointment, he turned out to be a Belfast man. He had left his native city with a six months' sentence waiting for him. Having worked up his way to head

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waiter in a large hotel, he had the effrontery to insult his betters for their generosity by organizing the hotel staff when they struck against short wages and long hours. He had personally led pickets against the blackleg labour which had been imported. The blacklegs failed; official strike-breakers—the police—were used. A warrant was issued for Mulligan's arrest. He went into hiding—wisely so, because the magistrate who tried the case happened, by the purest coincidence, to be the chief shareholder in the hotel. In his absence, he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Mulligan professed himself a Socialist, but belonged to no party—he was a born Anarchist.

“Where do we go from here? What about a look around town?” Mulligan showed no desire to go to the barracks. “I've just arrived and I'd like a look round before we're bumped off.”

“Looking around here is as good a way of getting bumped off as any I know!” said Bill. “Still, we're born to die. Look here, Keith, get along with ye and see whether that girl is about—we'll see ye on the last tram.”

I thanked Bill, we arranged to meet at the Café Catalan at ten-thirty. Would Rosita wait? I was half an hour late; would she even turn up? The Ramblas café was crowded with the better class Catalans, Republicans, small factory owners, Government

officials. At a table, together, sat a group of English officers in khaki uniform. They wore the red cross emblem. These were the British medical unit from the Huesca front. Not a sign of Rosita. I bought a paper and sat down at a table near the door and ordered a coffee. Someone gave my paper a tug.

"Hombre! Have you no eyes!" It was Rosita, looking even prettier than I had imagined her. Over a red jumper she was wearing a leather jacket, a red band of ribbon in her black curls made her look younger than ever.

I managed to look stern: "Hombre! you're late. Shall we have time to hear your Lazzaro?" (The opera began at five-thirty.)

"Must you go back to your cuartel to put your comrades to bed?"

"No, but it is past five-thirty and we have no seats."

"What are these, sceptical one?" She produced two tickets.

At the Teatro Tívoli we were just in time to watch Rhadames's investiture. The theatre was packed—prices had been reduced by the C.N.T. and the people were taking advantage of it. The doubtful types of variety shows were still open, but few of the working people ever went to see them.

The orchestra was extremely good, the chorus a little undertrained, the tenor, Lazzaro, superb. The

producer had taken a few liberties with the libretto. Aida was the daughter of a race fighting for its freedom against Fascist aggression—Amneris, the priest and the king all gave the Fascist salute on every possible occasion. Rosita spotted this.

"Ah," she whispered to me during the scene between Aida and Amneris, "she is a bad one that! Fascista!" Rhadames was a well-meaning but rather stupid imperialist; Amonasaro, the Ethiopian king, was suspiciously like the Negus. He was stabbed by an Egyptian storm-trooper who smartly gave the Nazi salute. He, in his turn, was slain by the indignant Rhadames—an imperialist no longer. The singing of the principals, however, was so superb that these little innovations were not too disturbing.

After Rhadames and Aida had been duly entombed, they came out to take their curtains in the midst of rapturous applause. In place of the usual bow, they saluted with the clenched fist.

Back at the Café Catalan, we settled down and ordered supper.

"This war sure is getting serious; that's the last packet of Camels in Barcelona." I looked over to where a group of civilians sat drinking. They seemed to be English and of the Press. Two of them left the group and came over to a table near us.

To Rosita, all English in Barcelona must be friends—she smiled sweetly at the two pressmen. Even in

my uniform, my appearance and accent were obviously English. I felt a little awkward, not wishing to push myself on to my countrymen. Then the taller of the two eased the situation by inviting us over to their table. He introduced himself as Minifee of the *New York Herald Tribune*, and his colleague as Louis Delaprée of *Paris-soir*. Delaprée spoke quite good English; close to, he was obviously French. They were on their way to cover the Madrid front. I was glad to be able to talk a little shop, apart from the rumours of victories and defeats, and unending political discussions, we were rather limited in our conversation at the barracks. Rosita sat it all out without a word. Both of the journalists were convinced that the Government was bound to win unless Hitler or Mussolini actually imported troops wholesale. Delaprée thought this improbable. "France cannot allow Hitler to dominate Spain; she would be cut off from her colonies. Nor can Britain afford to allow Italy to hold Majorca and control the Empire trade routes."

Minifee was doubtful: "Britain knew that Franco had promised Hitler Spanish Morocco as the price of his assistance and yet Eden, under direct instructions, rushed through the non-intervention pact to hamper further the legal Spanish Government—even a politician isn't as dumb as that, unless he has a devilish subtle line."

"Your lady friend can't be enjoying the conversa-

tion." Miniffee turned to Rosita: "*Habla Usted Inglés?*"

"*Un poco, si*: English no spoken here—you like whisky?—sleep weeth me, baybee!"

"That's enough, Rosita; you speak very nicely." I feared what might naturally follow.

"Why do your friends laugh? I do not laugh at you—you speak my Spanish *muy muy mal!*" Rosita looked cross.

I translated her last English sentence for her. She looked a little confused—then laughed. "Oh! It is I who am the bad one. I am very sorry it is not good. *Oiga!*" she called over the waiter and asked for a pack of cards.

"What do we do now, play poker?" asked Miniffee. Rosita shuffled the cards and asked me to cut. I wondered whether the others thought we were a new type of confidence tricksters, and reassured them. Rosita laid the cards, face down, in three piles. With great concentration, she turned up card after card. I could not follow—the pictures are quite different from our own.

"I see you have much love; when you have found it, you will lose it always." She turned up more cards. "For women you must not presume; when you have least, you will have most." Now cutting and turning over cards: "You will not do that for which you came here—there is a coach with a fair woman and

with it is death." Rosita looked very perturbed by her own discovery.

Miniffee looked serious: "No more joy rides with blondes for you, my boy," he said. Delaprée was interested and amused. "Will the *camarada* try my destiny?"

"You must be serious. The cards cannot lie." Delaprée cut the pack with great dignity. "You will have much love from a good woman—you will have many *chicos*." Finances were to be profitable. She made the third and final: "Here is a journey—a large city, death is all around it—you must not leave it: from the air there is death for your honour!"

"Cheery little soul!" Miniffee laughed at Delaprée's serious look. "Tell me, what awful end I have waiting for *me*."

Rosita was annoyed. "No, hombre, it is not a good thing to laugh at the cards." She could not be persuaded to do Miniffee's cards. "And what would Marx have to say to that?" he asked. We ordered some more drinks.

Bill arrived shortly after ten, he was alone and looked worried. He would not sit down, but called me outside. "Keith, I'm in sayrious trouble. Oi've lost Mulligan. For all we know, he may be lying a corpse at this minute."

It took some little time to discover what had actually happened. Apparently, Bill and Mulligan

had found a little bar off the Ramblas and had settled down for food and a drink. Mulligan had found a young woman and while Bill was visiting the lavatory, she had speedily lured him away.

"Come on now, don't be lookin' after that young woman that's been enough trouble for one night." Bill felt the loss of the recruit in a personal way.

I quickly made excuses to the two journalists. Despite Bill's obvious disapproval, we made our way down the Ramblas to the scene of the alleged abduction. On the way, I explained to Rosita as best as I could what had happened. We arrived at the café—it was Rosita's turn to explain to me. In the café one drank coffee and wine, if unaccompanied this was remedied by one of the charming young women seated at the bar running along one side of the café. Later, one could retire to the more intimate atmosphere of the upstairs premises.

The café was closing when we arrived. Rosita explained our mission to the manager. He was sympathetic but could not help us.

"The English *compañero*, he was here, I saw him, you saw him—but now? We are closing the café; upstairs is already closed for the night." The manager shrugged his shoulders.

"Can we go upstairs and look for him? He must return to the cuartel to-night. To-morrow, we may have to leave for the front."

"Hombre! I have told you all have gone. My girls are tired; they will sleep now."

There was nothing more to do; we had to leave the café. Both Bill and I felt worried. "Levy will have us shot for this, it's the fault of both of us." I was wondering how to explain the loss to our leader.

Rosita was reassuring: "*Mañana*, he will return tomorrow. He is with a woman, we cannot look in every bed in Barcelona."

We were now too late to get in to Sarriá—it was past eleven and apart from the sentries, the last tram had gone. Rosita offered to find us somewhere to sleep in her flat off the Calle Viejo and suggested we returned the next morning to the café for our comrade in arms. After a little persuasion, Bill agreed. The flat was pleasantly furnished—a living-room led into a bedroom; the kitchen was modern, tiled in blue and white. In addition to a useful looking cooking range, there was a bath—a luxury in the old quarter of the town. Rosita apparently had means.

"This is the flat of my brother; he is a journalist on *Claridad*; now he is at Madrid," she explained.

"And your *novio*?" I felt I must get to know sooner or later.

Rosita looked confused. "I have not thought, he has sent no word, he is with his regiment at Saragossa—I do not know. I must sleep now. Here are

some rugs, you will be comfortable here. *Buenas noches.*" Rosita left us.

"Arr! now you've upset the girl with indacent proposals ye've been makin'? Keet, Oi'm ashamed of ye." Bill's moral sense was offended. "Oi hope ye'll apologize."

The next morning Rosita made us coffee. Last night's mood was forgotten, she chatted happily. "To-day is Sunday and there will be a Corrida for the benefit of the Red Cross. You will come?"

"If we do not find our comrade, we'll be in barrack prison instead. Can I telephone to cuartel from here?"

"*Claro, hombre!* let me help you." Rosita called me to the telephone—I heard an English voice, it was Birch. I explained what had happened. He was very reasonable. Levy had not returned, no one had worried about us, presuming we were with him in the city. He advised us to report Mulligan's loss to the authorities and to Levy, unless he showed up before twelve. We were to ring up, as soon as he was found.

Bill was relieved to hear that we were not to be immediately arrested. We set off for the café. At nine o'clock, the Rambla was almost deserted, the town fresh and gay in the morning sunshine. Those people who were about were dressed in their best clothes; Sunday was a holiday. From the tall chimney stacks, on the outskirts, smoke still poured; the

munition workers were doing double shifts to try and stem the flood of destruction poured in from Italy and Germany—for these workers there was no holiday.

"Will, Oi'll be b . . . d!" Bill swore with feeling, a thing he seldom did. I saw the cause of it—walking towards us with a highly peroxidized blonde on his arm—was Mulligan.

"Meet the girl friend; this is Lolita, boys, who looked after me when my comrades deserted me." No signs of the penitent were noticeable.

"Michael Mulligan, ye should be ashamed of yer-self, ye might've had us all shot for desertion." Bill was highly indignant. Things looked like developing into a free fight, so tactfully I suggested that we should have breakfast and get our story straight.

At the Lloret I took the opportunity to telephone to Birch. He sounded relieved to hear the lost sheep had returned. There was no need to return at once as general leave had been given to celebrate the capture of Mount Aragon from the Fascists. The Spanish commandant had invited the English to see the bull-fight in the afternoon.

When I returned to the table, the blonde had disappeared. Rosita looked pleased when I told her the news; we should sit together. After breakfast, we parted. Bill, Mulligan and myself returned to Sarriá, Rosita went to buy our tickets with ten pesetas I had

given her. We arranged to meet at the metro station nearest to the bull-ring.

We arrived back without further mishap. Birch called me aside: "To-night we are going to have an important discussion, I can give no details at present. To-morrow we must report for special duty at 6.30 a.m. We may be leaving for the front, I can't say. That's all for the present."

After lunch, I left for Barcelona alone; Bill had decided to go with the English group. Rosita was waiting outside the metro when I arrived. We walked through the sunny streets with their tall palms to the bull-ring. Built in Moorish style, of red brick and mosaic, it has a beauty of its own. The Catalans were already standing in long queues. Hawkers sold greasy doughnuts cut from a long winding coil, sweets, peas and photos of the leading toreros and lengthy ballads telling tales of loves and hates. War was forgotten, the crowds were festive.

We found our seats just two rows away from the front. For half an hour the bull-ring filled. I looked out for the English contingent; there were no signs of them. At three, the people began to clap and whistle and then were silent. The band struck up the Anarchist and Communist Anthems. Then came the grand parade; first, the Alguaciles superbly mounted, dressed in black and gold; behind, the matadores with their crimson cloaks. The toreros

followed gravely bowing to the cheers of the crowds.

Behind us was a disturbance. Over the good-natured protest of the crowds, I heard a familiar voice: "An' all this to see a f . . . g coo kilt." The British were sitting two rows behind us. The band had stopped. From the judge's box, a trumpet blared. It was still echoing when it was drowned by an angry roar—a black bull rushed into the arena. Blinded by the sudden sunlight, he rushed round the ring in a fury. For two hours we watched the fascinating pageant of death. Six bulls were killed, some with a skill which sent the crowds mad with enthusiasm; others tired and worn by cautious toreros were placidly butchered. The crowds showed their disapproval of one clumsy kill by hurling seat covers at the unfortunate torero.

After the last kill we managed to slip away from the others. "Let us leave the city for a few hours. Outside Sarriá is a villa, it is peaceful, there are grounds we can walk through." Rosita nodded. "Then you will not have to run to your cuartel so quickly." We chatted rather awkwardly in the tram. Rosita pointed out a large building guarded by militiamen with fixed bayonets. "Here justice is dealt to the Fascists—one can hear the shots early in the morning."

We reached the village square and walked out

beyond the church and our barracks to where the white road grew narrow and led up the mountain. The villa could not be seen from the road. On its gate-post, the wrought-iron coat of arms still stood; across the shield the hammer and sickle had been roughly painted. We walked up the winding drive. On either side of us were the olive-trees, further up, thick pines and birches hid the villa completely. Then, quite unexpectedly, we saw it through the trees. Red against the sunset, the pointed turrets took on a fantastic quality.

The villa had been built by a wealthy profiteer at the end of the last century. It was planned according to his own taste which ran to French seventeenth-century chateaux. It was built on the site of an ancient castle; in earlier times there had been a Roman temple in the grounds. We walked up a stone-flagged path covered with moss and weeds until we came to a small plateau on which was a summer-house. We sat down on the damp grass and looked out across the city to the lights in the harbour. The sun was gone; behind us through the trees reared the burnt out villa, it had an almost sinister quality in the dusk.

Rosita moved close to me. "*Muy malo*, the house is not good, here in the night it is good not to be alone."

"Rosita, forgive me if I spoke of your *novio*." I still

was wondering at her sudden unhappiness the night before. "I do not wish to presume."

She stroked my face. "*Rubio mio*, you do not presume—I am happy to be here with you."

I slipped off the jacket of my uniform, she lay back on it—suddenly she became the most important, the most desirable thing in the world. I kissed her mouth, she drew back; with her hands she pushed me away from her, but with her body she drew closer to me. The moon slipped from behind a cloud, like a woman's breast from a black shawl. Rosita struggled no more; she held me in her arms and kissed me back, I could taste the salt blood in my mouth as she bit my lips.

We lay together for a long time, very quiet, very happy. I looked at my watch, it was after nine. We had eaten nothing since lunch and were hungry. We walked down the flagged path towards the road. On the way we stopped to watch a fountain in the moonlight. Water splashed from between the raised hands of a faun. He smiled as if secretly glad that the profiteer who had defiled his garden had been uprooted by those to whom the land belonged—the peasants, who were nearer to him than their sleek priests ever imagined.

Once out of the grounds of the villa, we hurried towards the village—at the café we ordered some hot food and wine. After supper, Rosita walked back to

barracks with me. We said good night under the shadow of the confessional.

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When I arrived in the dormitory, the meeting was already in full progress. Jeans, in the chair, explained its purpose, namely to remove our political leader from office. The shortcomings of Levy were many and varied, a lengthy indictment had been drawn up which was to be sent to the Party Representative in Barcelona. It was a revealing document, our political leader appeared to be a minor Machiavelli. As Birch read out the charges, my admiration grew. Divide and rule had been his slogan. On six different occasions we had called aside six different members of the English group; to each he had confided that he, individually, was the only member of the group he could trust, darkly counselling them to watch for signs of *political unreliability which took its worst form in Trotskyism.*

Comrade Levy's non-appearance was another matter for censure. How easy it was for the political lambs to stray when their shepherd spent his days and most of his nights at the Hotel Lloret. This last seemed to be a very good thing to me.

Financial matters were alleged to be very unsatisfactory. Pay was irregular. The Catalan government did not pay its militia until they had returned from the front; then, their arrears were paid up in a

lump sum. The relatives of those unfortunates who did not return, received the cash instead. Comrade Levy had taken on the role of fairy godmother. When the English were particularly critical, he would call them together: "Look boys what I found for you —'undred pesetas!" Although this would produce apparent joyous unity, human nature being what it is, everyone asked *how* Comrade Levy had *found* a hundred pesetas.

Various other points were raised in the indictment, rather as make-weight to put over the recommendation that Nat Levy be removed. We were all asked to sign. This we all did in turn; only Mulligan, with a deep-seated dislike of majorities, refused. A discussion followed. We finally got to bed just before one.

I hardly seemed to have laid my head on the pillow, when I heard Jock shouting "Get up, Lads! special duty."

It was almost dark. I dressed quickly. No one knew quite what was to happen. Birch read out the names of six of us: Scott, Avner, Jeans, Jock, Marshall and my own. In the square, we found a lorry waiting; we climbed aboard. No one had the least idea where we were bound for. Leaving for the front was discarded as we took no kit with us. Special guard in the town or docks seemed the most likely explanation.

We drove in the direction of town and then turned off towards the fortress. Eventually, we stopped before a large building—it was vaguely familiar, I suddenly realized it was the prison pointed out by Rosita. The lorry stopped, we clambered out. There was no one in sight save an optimistic hawker selling his long coils of doughnuts. This was sighted at once by Sid. We waited for about ten minutes outside the gates, still no one appeared. Sid was missing his breakfast.

“Can I fall out to buy doughnuts?” he asked Jock, who was in charge. “All right, ye greedy bastard, but get eno’ for all of us.” Sid came back with an arm full of hot greasy rolls, an orderly unlocked the gates and called us inside. We had only just time to seize our doughnuts from the parcel. Through a passage we entered the courtyard. A group of officers stood talking, a dozen troops were leaning on their rifles. No one was taking the slightest notice of us. We began to eat our doughnuts. One of the officers pointed to us and laughed. “You English have strong stomachs.” Further conversation was cut short by a bugle, the soldiers stood to attention, we dropped the remains of our doughnuts.

From the other side of the square a double file marched out, between them six men dressed only in shirts and trousers. One of them was half carried between two soldiers, at first I thought he was ill; he

was shaking with terror. They were led to the wall facing us at the end of the courtyard and left. The knees of the frightened man gave way, he slumped to the ground. His guards tied his arms to his side. All the time he was making whimpering noises, the man next to him said something in a contemptuous tone, the creature was past scorn. He was left half kneeling, half sitting. The guard withdrew, the officer gave an order, the men raised their rifles. Another officer came forward with a paper. He read aloud the names of the condemned men. I understood snatches of the charges he read out—"armed insurrection against the legally elected government of Spain . . . firing on the people . . . to be shot to death. . . ."

Two of the six refused to have their eyes bandaged, they stood, their arms raised in the Fascist salute. The officer drew back. Another of the six began to sway—before he could fall, the first volley crashed out: four figures slumped to the ground. The officer gave another order, the rifle bolts clicked as another cartridge slipped into the breech. Another volley, the two remaining figures collapsed, their shirt-fronts bloody. I felt very sick. There was a thud behind me—long Sid had fainted.

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We leave for Madrid

WE were excused from duty for the rest of the day and told to report for guard at eight-thirty. Bill and I walked from the prison down into the city, through the Plaza Cataluña to a café near the docks, in the hope of seeing Rosita. We had little to say. The morning's drama had left us both far from talkative. We sat in the sun, sipping coffee, watching the ships in the harbour.

"Keet, you must not be taking things so hard—it's warr that we're foighting. T'ink of the thousands of wimin and children the Fascists have butchered in cold blood!"

I was thinking, thinking hard. But it did not make things much easier—those six bloody heaps had been enemies, they had also been men—was there no solution other than kill, kill, kill!

"You don't like blood, my friends. Nor do I, but the fight has been forced upon us." I looked up across to the next table at a man in officer's uniform. "Forgive me, I overheard your conversation. I am Doctor Stephan attached to Thaelmann Centuria."

"You speak excellent English," I commented when the doctor had joined us.

"I thank you, I have lectured in your country several times. My home is Vienna. Like you, I would rather build than destroy—the choice is not our own. The Fascists have forced us to meet violence with violence. If we win, we shall have destroyed the primary cause of war—Fascism." Dr. Stephan lit a cigarette.

"But must we meet violence with violence, is passive resistance an impossibility?" I was feeling very passive at that moment.

Dr. Stephan smiled. "My friend, if we could count on an even moderately intelligent majority—yes. But can you? Germany is our answer, Italy another, and perhaps Spain. Individual life is not the ultimate and supreme good. We have a debt to our fellows, to our children. Fascism has made of death a god, of violence a creed. The modern Corporate State has all the means for the destruction of reason." He grew more emphatic: "With the church, the radio, the cinema day in, day out, preaching this code of destruction, the people who are always children accept and believe it. Nothing short of a great war may disillusion them—then it is already too late. This slaughter here in Spain is the prelude—it will be as nothing when the European horror breaks out. You, all of us are here—I hope—to try and avert that catastrophe—there is no other excuse."

"Oi agree with ivery word he says, Keet, he's roight, we've no reason to be mourning of such rats as we saw destroyed." Bill was relieved.

"I'm not mourning them, I'm just not used to see six men shot before breakfast," I closed the discussion.

"Have you seen your British watchdog in the harbour?" asked Dr. Stephan. "One of your British cruisers is anchored there now."

We walked down to the quay to inspect the ship and went aboard one of the small steamers that take one around the harbour for a peseta. The cruiser, the *London*, which resembled a toy seen from Sarriá looked most impressive at close quarters. The crew busied themselves polishing over-polished fittings while a band played on the quarter-deck. No shore leave was permitted; no doubt a wise Admiralty feared the sailors might become infected with "red" propaganda. We passed very close to the ship, close enough for Bill to shout "How are ye all?"

"Okay, matey, 'ow's the war doin'?" came back from a brawny-looking A.B. An officer hurried down some steps and spoke to the man who, thereupon, disappeared below. We gave a *salud*, a few responded with the clenched fist greeting. We passed several cargo-boats and three seaplanes moored under the guns of the Monjuich fortress which overlooked the whole harbour. Two sleek French destroyers anchored near the mouth of the harbour; beyond the bar we could

see other grey shapes—these, German and Italian warships, kept outside as though they were waiting their time to send shells smashing into the crowded city.

We all lunched together at a small German restaurant near Place Tetuan. Our host talked to the doctor in German. We had a real German meal, sausage with sauerkraut, and drank lager. Dr. Stephan introduced his friend as Herr Braun. He shook hands and sat at our table. "In England you know nothing of Fascism, we Germans carry its marks on our bodies." He took off his coat and opened his shirt: his chest looked as though a child with a paint box had painted a net of red stripes across it. For half an hour, every day for a week, Nazis had taken him from his cell in Sonnenburg and held him suspended while they beat him with thin steel lathes. He had lived to escape to Barcelona, and had managed to start his café on borrowed money.

After lunch, I decided to try and find Rosita and spend a sunny afternoon at the villa in the hills. Dr. Stephan insisted on paying for the lunch, and returned to the hospital. When I reached Rosita's flat, I got no response. Leaving a note asking her to join me, I took the tram up to Sarriá.

The weather had been perfect for the last week, today it was hotter than ever. I took a new path to the villa grounds, it led me through a field of vines. Much of the fruit remained ungathered. I picked some, still

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hanging from the vine. The grapes were warm and sweet. Spiked cactus grew along the side of the path, lizards scuttled under stones as I passed. From the dry grey stones of the olive-fields came a shimmering haze of heat. Nearer to the house were orange-trees, heavy with fruit; beyond them lemon and almond-trees. Close to, in the sunlight, the villa was completely gutted, its towers still stood, but its main roof had fallen in, the fire had made great cracks across its walls. In places I saw the now familiar scars of rifle and machine-gun bullets. In a shrine, a headless Madonna still clutched a plaster Christ. It was no aesthetic loss, it looked a recent importation by the late tenant.

Continuing to explore, I saw a sunken garden, in the Italian style. In the centre, was a large ornamental bath. The whole was planned with exquisite taste. The bath was fed from a spring and was crystal clear. I slipped off my clothes. The water was so cold, it took my breath away. I climbed out and lay in the warm sun and the smell of the late flowers.

I must have dozed off. "*Oiga!*" I woke—standing by the side of the bath were a man and a girl, apart from their rich tan, as naked as myself.

"Are you a nature lover?" asked the young man. "These grounds are lent to the nudist club; we have to ask," he explained, "strangers have a habit of spying on us." The young woman laughed, "It is we who spied on this stranger, you slept very well."

I apologized for my trespass. "I am from England and with the militia. In England I am a very keen nudist," I lied.

"Hombre! but that is very interesting, you must talk to the others—they are near at hand." Adam and Eve led me to a small plateau. There were about twenty men, women and children, some digging the ground, others playing ball, while some just lay in the sun.

My guide hailed a bearded giant, busily hoeing at the soil: "An English comrade." The bearded one saluted. "We welcome all nature lovers here, our people are happy in their new freedom, the church has always taught the people the body is wicked, we teach them that only by freeing the body, the spirit can exist and know its God."

"Are you Christian?" I asked.

"Yes, indeed, we try to lead true Christian lives, our salvation lies in this return to the soil. Here in Spain we can live by our land and its fruits. Our peasants are nearer to God than ever the priests of a corrupt church can be."

This was unexpected. "Do you call the existence of the Andalusian peasant the good life? He works for twelve hours for beans and a little wine? His soil is sapped by the sun, his woman old at twenty-five?"

"This need not be. I do not talk of my province alone. The 'Heretic Moors', six centuries ago, made irrigation possible in the dry provinces. They were

driven out, their aqueducts fell in disrepair. To-day, with the church and the nobles owning the land between them, we are more backward than we ever were before."

"To-day, the people clamour for reforms, they elected a government to win those reforms; rather than grant them, the church and the generals deluge the soil with blood. They have promised to build a Mosque in Madrid, the day the Moors enter it. Do you wonder the people have burnt their churches?"

One of the colony came over to the leader: "Marcial, it is time for the exercise."

Marcial excused himself and shook hands. "Come here whenever you like. Good-bye, comrade."

I walked back to the garden for my clothes.

The days passed pleasantly at Sarriá with the peace of a disciplined routine. I learned to dismantle a machine-gun, to fire a rifle with a degree of accuracy and to drink wine from a bottle with a long spout which squirts the wine into one's mouth. This last was my most difficult feat.

The news from the various fronts was not encouraging. Huesca was expected to fall every day to our troops, nevertheless it remained untaken. Meanwhile, the Fascists, reinforced with German and Italian regular troops, drew nearer to Madrid.

The indictment of our leader had been sent to the

party headquarters in Barcelona, but we had received no answer. Levy still remained as exclusive as ever, the only difference was that we received our small allowances from Birch.

One Sunday morning, the main Thaelmann Centuria entered the barracks, on leave from the Huesca front. These were the pick of our troops, the first volunteers to reach Spain after the revolt broke out. From them, we received a real impression of what the war was really like. The Moors appeared to be the main difficulty. The Spanish troops, on either side, could not be persuaded to take part in night raids, these were left to the Thaelmann troops and the Moors. Unmoved by rifle or machine-gun fire, the Moors were completely demoralized by hand-grenades. These last, from all accounts, were more dangerous to throw than to have thrown at one—they had a habit of going off in one's hand without warning. There was little aircraft activity on that front and one soon got used to the shelling. All in all, I was a little relieved at their description; we were expected to be drafted to this front in a few days' time.

Days went by and still no news of our transfer. Discipline at the barracks was tightening. A German officer had walked into the barracks unchallenged, he discovered the sentries busily playing poker. The same day at luncheon, two guards with fixed bayonets had been stationed at the dining-room doors to control the

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hungry crush. This was too much for the German officer, he made a detailed report to the Spanish military authorities. They received his recommendations with enthusiasm, a new system was inaugurated.

It was tedious at times, but it worked. Passes were tightened up, parades before breakfast introduced, punishments applied for non-observation of regulations. These were ordered by the defaulters' own comrades. Discipline came from below instead of above—it worked even with the Spanish troops who are staunch individualists to a man.

One result was to make our group eager to go to the front. A fresh report against no action being taken against our political leader was dispatched. Mulligan was the only dissenter. In private he told me his reason: "Nat Levy means to get safely back to London and stick out his chest, if we stick with him we'll come through as well—Jews are lucky."

"Why did you join the army?" I asked him.

"For a lot of reasons, my personal reasons. I don't mind fighting, but I don't want to be a bloody martyr like Birch and some of you others—you're a long time dead!"

The day after our second protest was sent, we received a note saying that there would be a meeting in the dormitory that night. After dinner we sat on mattresses and borrowed chairs, and waited. Birch brought a man with him: "This is Ralph Bates, boys,"

—tall, stout, about forty, looking more like a master plumber than a revolutionary leader. He looked everyone over quickly as he shook hands. He took a seat next to Jock who acted as chairman. "Well, comrades, I'm here to settle a matter which seems to be giving you all trouble—your leader." His directness of manner put everybody at their ease at once. "I have examined your accusations and asked your leader to answer them—as yet, he has not done so." He went on to deal with the indictment point by point. A lot of it sounded petty, childish even, under the examination. Bill stood up: "You'll excuse me saying Oi'll not be goin' to the front wit' Nat Levy!"

"Who agrees with him?" asked the party representative.

Once more, Mulligan was the only dissenter.

"Well, one thing is clear: you boys and your political leader must part company. I think I can arrange it at once." Ralph Bates drew out a bunch of papers from his valise. "In Albacete, in camp, are a group of English, over sixty of them. They are receiving a first-class training by ex-service N.C.O.s. They are fully equipped with the latest and best of military gear—at present I can give you no further details. You must make up your minds now, I have to take back an answer to-night. You appear to have had no political training—until you leave I would be ready to give you an hour's talk three times a week."

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Bates won everyone completely in the few minutes he had been in the room. Even Mulligan was under the influence of his strong personality. Just as our absent leader created distrust, so, with the same spontaneity, this ex-soldier, skilled artisan and revolutionary, whose novels were the finest on modern Spain, inspired it.

For over an hour, he analysed the present situation we were faced with in Spain. He used none of the jargon or abstractions affected by some Communist speakers. His analysis of the historic basis of the war was brilliant in its simplicity. Bates asked for our decision. It was unanimous—we all would leave for Albacete.

The next day, Birch, who had taken over temporary command, gave us leave until ten-thirty to get our kit together and buy what necessities we might need for the front. We all compiled lists. Sid's was the most comprehensive by far, his needs apparently ranged from a dozen tins of beef to an oil stove for the trenches. Jock was quick to seize on the generous list. "Christ, man, look a' this, Sid's goin' tae feed the f . . . g Moors he teks prisoners."

"Mind your own business, you lousy Scotch baby raper," Sidney was loath to forgo one item of his list. Eventually, the whole was complete: stationery, bootlaces, buttons, needles, cotton, jack-knives, soap, razor blades. Sidney's stove was ruled out. Jeans

and myself were elected to make the actual purchases.

I had not seen Rosita for several days, she had divided her time between nursing classes at the San Pau hospital and military training at the woman's barracks. With the prospect of our sudden departure upon me, I decided to try and find her. By the concierge at her empty flat, I was directed to the training-school named after Spain's most famous woman: Dolores Ibarruri, Passionaria (passion flower), a miner's wife who with her amazing personality and courage had made her name loved and hated throughout Spain.

The women's training school was situated at the far side of the city, near the Government's rifle ranges. I could hear the crackle of the firing grow louder as I approached. A smart militia girl saluted me at the gates. I showed her my military pass.

"For a favour, can I see Camarada Rosita Alivares, Graell's Column?"

"Pass through, *camarado*, ask for the firing school."

Militia girls, mostly in trousers and overalls, passed to and fro. Many were remarkably pretty; some carried automatics, others rifles slung across their backs. I found Rosita resting at one of the ranges. She seemed glad to see me.

"*Chico!* where have you been? spending your days with the naked ones—ah, you have no shame!"

Rosita could not bring herself to approve of mass nudity. "For you my clothes do not matter, for me it is not necessary that you wear them, but for all Barcelona—Hombre!"

I explained to Rosita that we were probably leaving for the front in the morning, she looked unhappy and then cheered up. "It's nothing, we can leave together for Huesca." She had looked so pathetically sad that I had not the heart to tell her that our ultimate destination was Madrid. I showed her my shopping list, at once she became all domestic and organized our calls. Most of our needs were met by the *Sepu*, the Spanish Woolworth. When the list was complete, we packed the goods into my large rucksack and left it at the Colón until Jeans should arrive with his share.

At the Colón I met one of the German Centuria. "Heard the news?" he asked me. "What news?" We had always at least a dozen rumours per day, often contradictory. "The Russian boat arrives to-day from Odessa, at last we shall have some arguments for the Nazis. All the barracks are marching down to meet it."

This was news indeed. At last Russia was ignoring the non-intervention farce. Troops had gone out to the front, as many as three men to one rifle, waiting until the man firing was killed or wounded, then slipping it into the waiting hands of the next man.

Rosita was delighted. "Viva Russia! she and Mexico alone will help us." She seized my arm, "Hombre, why are you not a Russian?"

We lunched at the Café Catalan. Just as we were leaving, I saw one of the American newsmen. "Hello, you heard about Delaprée? he and the *Tribune* man were captured by the Fascists around Madrid. Looks bad for your people, the Fascists have taken Tardiente, Franco says he'll be in Madrid next week."

"What's happened to Delaprée?" I remembered Rosita's card game.

"He's O.K., they've dropped them both over the border. You'll excuse me, I got a date with a steak right now—so long."

The Plaza was already filling with people. The Rambla was a sea of moving heads. Barcelona was giving the Russians a real welcome. About three o'clock the first troops arrived, mounted Civil Guards in blue and silver, behind them Guardias de Asalto, half on horses, the rest on motor-cycles. These received a special cheer—they had fought with the people and helped to crush the rising in the July days.

Massed bands followed. The Spanish even more than most nations, love a band. The various left-wing contingents marched waving their banners. Then came the militia soberly dressed in khaki, only the first and last in each file carried rifles—the others were needed at the front. The artists' syndicate pro-

vided a splash of colour. They were headed by a huge clenched fist scattering top-hatted capitalists, priests and Phalangists. Their banners were excellent examples of pictorial propaganda at its best. One of them I noticed called upon fellow-artists to avenge Barral, one of the world's most brilliant sculptors killed by the Fascists.

More bands, women's militia in blue or khaki overalls, keeping well in step. An Alpine battalion with snow-shoes and skis ready for service in the Guadarramas. Then came the centurias from Sarriá, first the Thaelmann Centuria in steel helmets, each man a born soldier. In their ranks marched such men as Ludwig Renn, Hans Beimler and Kurt Eisner, convinced pacifists. The Press had praised their splendid service on the Aragon front, the crowds roared their welcome.

Behind them came the French Centuria, each man smiling at the girls as they passed. The English group, nine strong, were swallowed in a miscellany of Poles, Slavs, Belgians, Dutch, and Negroes of unknowable origin. They made a bright and varied show. Long Sid marched at the head with a large red banner, a change of wind was sufficient to wrap him in its folds. He had the look of a town councillor at a bazaar opening, that is not going too well.

Then came the Spanish Centurias, individualists all from the step they took, to the variations they tried

to introduce into their uniforms. They waved and smiled happily at friends and women. Whatever their military shortcomings, their welcome was a warm one; the people knew a personal love for these their brothers, husbands, sons or fathers, a feeling that was theirs alone.

The Anarchists were conspicuous by their absence. They had contented themselves by occupying the boat when it landed to ensure that they had the largest say in the distribution of any arms it might be carrying. The Russians had welcomed the Anarchists aboard, the ship was very lightly loaded, her half-empty holds held nothing but foodstuffs and winter clothing. The ship had made its first call at Valencia.

We could not get near the dock. The curious and enthusiastic crowds were immense, the atmosphere was one of a fiesta. We moved into a side-street and sat in an open café. The possibility of to-morrow's exodus made last post cards to relatives and friends necessary. I filled them in, half taking in the occupants of the other tables. They were the same types I had become used to seeing. Just as one accepts the bowler-hatted bank clerk and the rouged typist in a city tea-shop, so the sight of overalled men with four days' beards and rifles had become normality.

At one of the tables was a young woman I could not help noticing. She was neatly dressed in a blue

costume, black hair combed straight back, pallid and high cheek-boned, she had the look of a governess. She saw me watching her and began intently studying the menu. I returned to the writing of my cards. When I looked up again, I saw her staring in my direction, not at me but behind me. As discreetly as I could, under the pretext of pointing out a poster to Rosita, I looked in the direction she had been staring at so fixedly—two men sitting at a back table were talking quietly together, watching the woman through a large mirror in the café's façade. Without her being conscious of it, they could see her every move.

Quite suddenly, she happened to look into that mirror, and saw the elder of the two men staring at her. For a second, a look of panic came into her face, then very coolly she took a coin from her bag, slipped it on to the table and prepared to go. The elder of the two men spoke quickly to his companion, and as the woman was leaving he hailed her. She walked straight on. The two men were on their feet, she broke into a run.

The younger man drew an automatic, the street was crowded, his companion knocked up his arm. Only a few feet behind us, the report sounded deafening, in the same split second the bullet whistled past my head, a hanging glass sign splintered. It was impossible to see what had happened. Then I heard

a woman screaming, we stepped into the road to see what was happening. She had not got far; two burly Anarchists were holding her, as the two men rushed to her. A crowd soon collected and hid them from our view.

Word ran from mouth to mouth up the street: "German spy!" The concentrated hate and fear in the people's tone shocked me. It is difficult to realize the hysteria that spy mania, always a part of war, can produce in normally sane and kindly people.

We left for the Colón. Jeans was waiting in the hall. We checked our lists. "Better get back at once," he suggested. "We've all got our kits packed—be sure you're ready before food to-night—that's an order." I said good-bye to Rosita. There was so little time, it was not an over-emotional parting. A lorry was going up to Sarriá and the driver offered us a lift.

The troops had not yet returned from the mass parade. I emptied the purchases from my rucksack and packed: blanket, underwear, spare boots, tweeds and flannels—I was soon ready. The others arrived—very excited, even Jock forgot to be rude to Sid. We were certain now that the Madrid front was our destination. Grievances that had developed during our weeks of inaction were forgotten. The high uncertainty of what we were going to do was infectious—even our refractory political leader was regarded in a charitable light.

David Marshall was sent out to buy wine in the village for our last meal in Sarriá. "Have as much as you want to drink, but not too much." Birch was taking no chances. "Remember, if Levy gets a chance to put us in bad with the new commandant he will do so."

Sid was given leave to say farewell to the diminutive Dolores. She was a tiny dark wisp of a girl, unattractive by Spanish standards, she had a fay charm of her own. Although she had adopted the English as a whole, her own particular charge was Sid. At first she had fed the long Englishman, fascinated by the quantities he devoured, then interest grew to love, he was her first *novio*. Sid was as other men, from his stomach to his heart was a short step.

The news of our prospective departure had reached the kitchen staff. Our table was decorated with flowers. "We get the flowers in advance; better now, when we can smell them. They've got none left at the Madrid front." Mulligan had a mordant sense of humour. Ray Cox, our enthusiast, took him up. "Don't you worry, they'll be putting flowers on your table when we come back, and the band out, eh, boys?" Somehow Ray's enthusiasm was more depressing than Mulligan's pessimism. Each of us must have wondered who would come back. The wine soon washed morbid thoughts away. We were toasted by the Spaniards until we nearly felt in heroic mood.

Just as the meal was finishing, a Spaniard came over to our table. "Comrad Keet *est á aqui?*" I recognized my name. "What is it?"

"A message for you in the guard-room." I left the table and followed the soldier. The officer of the guard handed me a note.

"*Caro Mio*, I must see you at once.

"ROSITA."

The officer smiled. "Go at once, I will tell your comrades. I hope her wall is not too high." He winked in the naughtiest manner. I hurried out and noticed an armoured-car drawn up in front of the main entrance, beside two motor-cycle escorts. The sentry stopped me, looked at my pass. "Caution! comrade, do not be late, no one may pass after ten." I found Rosita standing in the shadow of the wall.

"To-morrow you do not go to Huesca, I know! It is Madrid and you go without a word." Rosita sounded angry.

"But, *Chica*, I could do nothing, it would be useless to tell you." I tried to placate the girl, unsuccessfully.

"Hombre! you presume! You will go to Madrid and be killed by the Moors, I shall not care, there are many men in Spain."

It was my turn to be annoyed. "Good—may you be happy with them all—*buenas noches!*" I turned away, she caught my arm.

"Keet, it is not you I hate, it is this war. First it takes my Carlos, now you are to go." She began to sob. I slipped my arm round her. She was so changed from the slim dark amazon of the training-school. It was only for a moment, she blew her nose and smiled very effectively. "Forgive me this, *novio*, it is nothing. *Pasionaria* has said 'better to die than to live on your knees'."

"Let us say farewell to our fountain. We shall meet again when the Germans are driven from Spain." We walked up the road to the villa. The faun was still there in the moonlight, the water still splashed into the basin, we lay on the grass watching it. There was something incredibly peaceful about the atmosphere of the garden. The sound of a bugle below in the barracks brought me back to earth. "Rosita, darling, we must go."

"*Chico*, not yet, you will be gone for so long a time."

"Woman! For a few months, then we meet again." I suddenly felt terribly in love with Rosita. "Then we shall be married."

Rosita laughed: "You will not beat me—do the English make good husbands?"

I dressed quickly, it was nearly ten. For the last time, I watched my faun in the pale light, his expression seemed sad and a little cynical. In our dormitory, I found everyone in very high spirits. Bates was chatting with the boys on the political situation. Kit-bags

stood packed and ready. With Bates had come a plump jolly person in brown, he seemed as happy and excited as the boys themselves. I was introduced to him, it was René Masson, the famous artist and designer, whose *décor* is known to balletomanes all over the world. The last person one would expect to meet in an ex-girls' school dormitory in the middle of a civil war. We shook hands.

"Are you a Communist?" I asked him.

"No, but with Picasso and your Augustus John I agree that Fascism is the enemy of culture. If Spain is overcome, Europe may be put back for a century," Masson shrugged his shoulders, "but you already realize these things or you would not be here."

Bates came over to us. "We must be off, it's late now." We shook hands all round. "I hope we shall meet in Madrid—and later in Sevilla or Burgos, best luck to you all."

Ralph Bates and Masson departed, we settled down to sleep. I was wakened by someone shaking me and nearly blinded by a torch shining in my eyes. "Get dressed quickly and go downstairs." I had no idea of the time, it was still quite dark outside. In a few minutes we were all ready and down in the parade-ground. We found the Thaelmann Battalion in fighting order with fixed bayonets and steel helmets. Talking was forbidden. "Air raid." "Anarchists." "Italians landed from Mallorca." One heard whispered guesses

in the dark. Rifles were passed out, seven rounds to each man.

In front of the main entrance, two lorries were unloading. In the light of the doorway I saw that their load was rifles and ammunition cases. The lorries emptied, backed out through the gates and drove off into the night. We were given the order to return to our beds. We slept in our clothes. No one had any idea what the sudden turn out had meant. We began to learn that *why* is a word that is not used in war. Days later I heard from Jeans, who was always well-informed, that the commandant of our barracks had received a load of rifles from abroad and feared a raid by Anarchists.

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Once more, at seven, the brazen bugle turned us out into the bright morning sun. Unused to night alarms I felt tired and irritable, last night's dinner wine had not helped things. We went into the dining-room for our breakfast of black coffee and rye bread, under Birch's instructions we took our packs with us. After coffee, we reassembled in the yard to await our transport and orders from the Colón. For two hours we waited, still no lorry or news. Jeans telephoned to the Colón for instructions; we were to wait till twelve. We sat about in the hot yard. Spanish troops marched and drilled before us, until there was a permanent dust cloud over our heads.

Even Birch had nothing to say; we all sat feeling very depressed. Bill came over and sat by me. "Keet, if we're not out of here to-day, it's meself that'll be joining the Anarchists." I agreed. Twelve o'clock came, but still no lorry or message from the Colón. Even Jock was dispirited: "We're to be taking our kit back upstairs, I'm that full of f . . . g dust, I'd make a f . . . g good sandbag." He spat neatly between Sid's feet.

"You dirty Scotch bastard, you're not at home now." Sid's temper like everyone else's was ragged.

Birch saw trouble coming. "Leave your kit in a pile by the guard-house. Jeans, go down to the Colón to make a report. We'll have a swim in the pool before grub." This saved the situation. Splashing and ducking worked off everyone's temper. No one was surprised that we had not left—*mañana* was still the Spirit of Spain; now, in the Spanish language, also meant later.

After lunch, we sat in the lovely gardens with their palms and shady paths through which the nuns had walked. The old gardener, a wrinkled peasant of eighty, still tended the flowers and fruit-trees. No one dared to steal an orange or a nectarine from the heavy laden bushes, he went on with his work oblivious of wars and revolutions. Should the ancient find anyone at his beloved fruit, he would swear loudly and pursue them with incredible agility. If in a good mood, he

would give one an orange or some grapes, and recount scandalous stories about the nuns.

We sat about in the hot sun, eight very depressed English, I heard a shout—it was Jeans, he had secured our passes and we were to leave for Albacete at once—a lorry was on its way. Everyone cheered—at last we were moving. The guardian of the Hesperides rushed out of his little house imagining his most precious fruit was being raped, his curses followed us into the parade-ground.

A large red Ford truck was waiting. We piled in our kit. Just as we were leaving, Dolores rushed to the gate with a large parcel for "Seednee". We had ten minutes to catch our train in the city. The engine roared, the gears slipped in, we were off. My last sight of Sarriá was little Dolores standing waving in the dust and the sentry outside the confessional shaking a clenched fist in salute.

It was a most exhilarating ride; we tore through the village square, past rich villas, now homes of refugees or hospitals, others shuttered, their owners in exile. Down the broad Calle Muntaner with its blocks of luxury flats. The klaxon roared without ceasing; workers on an unfinished building waved the red front salute. Traffic grew thicker as we entered the Paseo de Gracia, our speed never slackened, we grazed an unexpected taxi, several citizens saved their lives by leaping on to the pathway.

International Column

WE found our seats on the train and breathed again, soon we were moving out of the station towards the open country. On trains in Spain there is now no set class for soldiers, I foraged and found a comfortable first-class compartment. Three young sailors welcomed me in. From their cap-bands, I recognized them as part of the crew of the *Jaime I*, Spain's most famous battleship. The rebel radio had told the world that this ship was bound for Vigo to declare for Fascists. The announcement had been a little premature, the War Office in Madrid had picked up a radio message from the *Jaime*: "Officers and Captain have acted in treasonable manner, we have seized ship in name of legal government, those resisting shot, others under arrest—radio further instructions." This laconic message covered one of the most exciting chapters of the civil war.

My fellow-travellers of *Jaime I* were bound for Cartagena to rejoin their ship. They were well provided for the journey, when one bottle was empty another took its place. I received more details of the mutiny

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of the *Jaime I*. It was unique in that the mutineers were captain and officers, the men remaining loyal to the Government. From Diego Anzouro, an ordinary A.B., I heard the story.

"On the day before the revolt broke out, we put to sea. No one knew what our orders were. Days before, the officers had been sounding our radio operators on their political views: one was *quasi-quasi*, the other a good Socialist. The loyal operator pretended to agree with the Fascist officers. No one knew what would happen. Before the ship left, a new officer was taken on board, he spoke Spanish badly. *Claro!* it was natural, he was from the German staff.

"Perez waited at table for the captain, he heard much arguing between captain and new officer. The German wished to anchor in Ceuta, it was now certain the captain was steaming to Vigo—some more vino Comrad Inglese?" Anzouro interrupted his narrative to pour us all more wine. "Perez did not hear much, it was enough, something was to happen on July 21st; when the officer drank to General Sanjurjo, we *knew* something was to happen. But the Fascists started three days too soon, from our operator we heard the news. The captain called us together: 'Men, we will sail at once for Vigo to help the Government of Spain!' He did not know we knew his plans and that we too had our plans. The day before, we had formed out committees, bueno Camarad, Soviets! our comrades had

arms and the main magazine was ours. We sent two delegates to the captain to ask that our ship leave for Cartagena, we knew from our radio that the Government were in control there.

"The captain refused. As our delegates were returning, they were shot from behind. Some of the officers came over to us, the rest opened fire with machine-guns and rifles. There was one, a very bad one! he used to kick the stokers when they weren't quick enough—hombre, a silly thing to do, men do not forget easily. He was down in the boiler-room when shooting began. 'Now,' says the stoker, 'it is my turn, the mule turns master.' The officer runs but he is not quick enough, the stoker has him by his jacket and pants. 'We have been hot for a long long time, you shall taste it,' he strips off the officer's clothes and pushes a shovel in his hands. The officer sweats, he is hot, his work is only done in the brothel, if he stops the stoker kicks his arse, hard. It is not wise even for an officer to strike his men—they remember.

"The fight was soon over, the captain and nine officers killed, with them the German, the others surrendered. They could not be trusted to order the ship, *claro!* they must do other work, decks must be washed, lavatories cleaned and the boat must have stokers. Hombre! they worked, we saw to it!"

The bottle passed round again, we were all a little merry. Up to now drinks had been "on" the *Jaime*

Primero. With quite a number of pesetas in my pocket, I fetched a bottle from the dining-car. Returning, I found our English party, mostly sleeping.

Back in our compartment, we finished the wine. It is seldom the Spaniard is drunk, but when he is he makes the most of it. We sang every song we knew, in between we shouted vivas! at the tops of our voices. No American cheer leaders could have done better. Viva la Republica! Viva Russia! Viva el Partido Comunista! We were joined by more sailors with more drink. Through a haze of liquor and smoke, I saw Sid's face pressed against the corridor window, it disappeared. A little later, Jeans appeared in the doorway. "Come and get back, we must all sit together—you're drunk anyway." His manner annoyed me, but I said nothing and sat still. "Come on," he shook my shoulder. The sailors realized something was amiss. I knocked his hand away, "The hell I will!"

Two of the sailors gave Jeans a heave into the corridor and slammed the door. My irritation disappeared, I felt very penitent and at once quite sober. I slipped out and back to our company, my reception was chilly, I was told I was under military arrest for striking a comrade. With me, in custody, was Mulligan, who had also refused to leave a comfortable seat he had found.

It was after twelve when we arrived in Valencia, here we changed trains for Albacete. Here I saw the last

of my sailor friends, in various attitudes and positions, cramped on the seats, or stretched on the floor, two of them were at home in the luggage racks—all dead to the world.

Hot coffee and sandwiches were a welcome find in the station buffet. There was no more talk at present of arrest. The Albacete train was dimly lighted, blinds had to be kept drawn against air-raids. This time, there were no discussions, we all found second-class compartments and settled down for the night. After a few hours it became uncomfortably cold in addition to my blanket, I had a lined trench-coat. Even then I could not keep warm in my summer uniform. It was a sharp contrast to the warm days in Barcelona.

Birch produced a bottle of cognac and passed it round, when it came to my turn I refused. "Come on, don't be a fool, forget about what happened, only leave some in the bottle." I took a welcome swig, we were all comrades again.

It was hardly night when we pulled into Albacete and piled on to the platform. We were met by a guard in high top boots, wearing a warm-looking Balaclava helmet. Over his uniform, he wore a heavy khaki overcoat, he carried a rifle and fixed bayonet. "Blimey! some o' the boys! I got so used ter 'earing French and German, I bin and forgot me own muvver's name. Got a fag, chum?" This was most unexpected.

"Christ! if it isn't old Bill himself."

I shook the apparition by the hand. "No, chum, Joe's the name, Joe Gough." Joe led us from the station, still talking. "Christ, it's an 'ell of a place, Albacete, full of foreigners, this 'ere International Column. Frenchies aren't bad, but they don't wash much, the Germans are b . . . rs for order, blimey, you wait and see little Willie on parade. 'Ere we are, boys, the Ritz 'Otel." We stopped outside a large brick building. Joe led us into a kitchen. Coffee was heating in huge blackened coppers. "'Ave a nice cup of 'ot coffee, mate. I 'ope you boys don't like sugar—you won't get it 'ere."

Our new barracks were built in typical Spanish style—four sides looked on to an open courtyard; what appeared to be a wooden platform ran the length of one side; in the grey cold light it was unbelievably dismal. Our sleeping quarters were on the top floor; in separate cubicles clean straw mattresses were piled in the corners. "'Ave a kip down 'ere till dinner. You'll get yer orders—see yer later." Joe disappeared.

We all slept till twelve, there were no signs of Joe. The courtyard was full of every nationality but Spanish. Burly Flemings with their incredible language; swarthy French peasants from Catholic Brittany or Provence, their fellow-countrymen from Paris, clerks, artisans, students. Good-looking Poles, among them many Jewish types, Czechs, tall blond Danes;

Italians, many of them fresh from the Abyssinian *débâcle*. Chatting to a group of them was an immense Ethiopian, a nephew of Ras Kasa; now all were united against Fascism. The Germans were well represented, again all types were included in the Thaelmann Battalion; brawny dockers from Hamburg, slight ascetic types with strange energy of a set purpose, ex-Reichswehr men who still retained something of the parade-ground manner. In spite of its amazing diversity of nationalities, one could not escape a strange feeling of unity and purpose.

Lunch was plain but plentiful. Bean soup was followed by stewed meat and pimentos. At Sarriá, we always had salad or fresh fruit against scurvy, here fresh vegetables could not be had, all was sent to the Madrid front.

I noticed a slim, fair young man, with a slight stoop, dressed in a greasy sweater, handing out wine-cups to the French. I had an uncomfortable feeling I had seen this youth before. His voice was no clue. He spoke a fluent argot. I determined to find out. "*Camarade, vous êtes Français?*" The youth turned round, "Good God! more English." There was absolute dismay in his voice, I recognized him, it was Esmond Romilly, nephew of right-wing Winston Churchill. Esmond and his brother Giles made news when they introduced to Public Schools "Out of bounds", the periodical plea for saner sex in schools.

Single to Spain by Watson, Keith Scott. Acc. No. 1.6



Acc. No. 12470

Single to Spain by Watson, Keith Scott.

So much publicity did it draw that uncle Winston remarked "I have no wish to be known as the uncle of Esmond Romilly."

In a warm sheltered drawing-room, with white chintz curtains and a polished Sheraton table with cocktail glasses mirrored in its glossy surface, we had last met. We walked out together as the orderlies wiped away the greasy remains of the meal into dirty buckets.

Esmond Romilly told me how on a bicycle he had crossed France, had lost his passport in Bordeaux, his wallet in Marseilles and had begged his food till he had found a boat-load of volunteers leaving for Valencia. On Spanish soil, he had joined the Russian contingent, as sounding the most orthodox. Twenty-five strong, they were a curious body, he afterwards discovered that they were not the hordes of Moscow, but White Russians from Paris, anxious to prove their good faith and return to Mother Russia and Stalin the New Little Father.

Every night, they would sing Russian laments, as the wine flowed they became less melancholy and usually concluded with wild gipsy choruses, orthodox to a degree, they ended with the *International*. They numbered in their ranks an ex-general, who for ever drew plans of the Crimean campaign, several ex-colonels, a Baron who had been unwise enough to try and blackmail the wealthy American who kept him

11.6
17

in Paris, and an odd mixture of ex-officers and pennyless nobility.

No one knew the real name of the general, he seemed to have forgotten it himself; under his coat, he wore a sailor's jersey embroidered with a name S.S. *NONO*; Nono he was christened, Nono he remained. The cuartel had a balcony once used by Spanish notabilities when addressing troops. General Nono liked to occupy it and harangued imaginary troops at the top of his voice, waving his bayonet in place of a sword. It was only when the parents of the local children complained that their offspring were frightened out of their wits by the lonely old warrior, that he was forbidden that pleasure.

A kindly old man he was most upset when he heard of the children's fears. He treated everyone with a great courtesy, every washerwoman was his *Dulcinea*. He would talk for hours about life at the Tzar's court—no one knew how or why he was in Spain, he himself least of all.

The Russians were having a party that night, and Esmond invited me to attend. The afternoon was taken up with drill. This was real training, we were attached to the Thaelmann Battalion; on parade officers had to be saluted, fatigue duties punished slackness. The men might complain about their officers off parade, on parade complete obedience was insisted upon. Punishments were ordered by the

men themselves. In no cases, short of murder or espionage, was the death-penalty operated. Latrine fatigue was most feared.

Birch gave me permission to join the Russians' party in the evening. After our supper, we found them in a local tavern. By eight o'clock, not a light was to be seen in Albacete, an important railway-junction for Madrid, it was a target for Fascist aircraft. A delightful evening ended with everyone just a little drunk, the party sang 'God Save the Tzar,' just to please Nono, who wept and embraced everyone. In the street, the darkness seemed almost tangible, Esmond and the Baron led the way. We had only gone a few yards, when we heard a blast of train sirens. In the darkness above us, we could hear a droning. The Russians were unmoved. Singing to themselves, they marched along, far from steadily, to the barracks. We had reached the corner of our street, when we heard a thudding crash. Six followed one another in succession. We ran the last few yards, the droning disappearing into the distance.

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The next day, we were placed on special duty, from Valencia train-loads of clothing, food and munitions, were coming in; all this had to be loaded on to lorries and stored, or sent up to the front line. Romilly and myself were put together in the store, checking the clothing as it came in from railway-sidings. At four in

the afternoon we were told to get some sleep, from ten till two we were on night guard at the railway-station.

For early November, the cold was intense. We could hardly hold our rifles in our numb fingers. Groups of refugees sat cold and homeless on the darkened platform. Beside them were their pathetic belongings; with their children many of the women clutched canaries in wooden cages. Some had even rescued hens. In the packed waiting-room, a pig slept beside his owner. Even through their cold and misery, some of the peasants managed to smile or give a *salud* as we passed up and down. Beyond the station building was a large wooden storehouse. Through its windows I could see a crowd of small children, the eldest being seven or eight, and the youngest perhaps two years old. Only a few of them lay asleep, none of them were crying. Some clutched little packets of food as they sat round a large stove. One in particular I noticed, a boy of about four, he seemed unnaturally clumsy, two or three other children sat near him, helping him to reach his food. It was the pathetic solemnity of the little crowd that affected me.

A woman in nurse's uniform came up to me out of the darkness. "Poor kids, no parents, no homes, they're going to Valencia from Madrid." The clumsy child fascinated me. "What is wrong with that *chico* that the others are so attentive?"

"He is blind, a bomb from a German plane."

I had to leave the nurse, I was too near tears to stay. I was to learn all the horror and tragedy of war, but few things were to touch me as that pathetic group of tiny refugees.

Albacete will always remain in my mind as one of Spain's most unpleasant towns. Like many large railway-junctions, it possesses no character of its own. It has two main industries, the manufacture of lethal knives and a thriving though sordid brothel quarter. Few of its roads are paved, in winter they are rivers of mud. We found one presentable café, where we would spend an evening away from the barracks.

It was in the Café Real that I met Ludwig Renn. Tall and thin, almost bald, quick sensitive eyes behind spectacles, his face lined with suffering, this German aristocrat had all the dignity and sympathy of a medieval saint. It was this dignity that had inspired his Nazi captors in the concentration camp to devise fresh tortures, new insults and indignities to break his spirit. They had failed. An old man in body, broken in health, he had come to Spain in freedom's most decisive hour. A staff-officer in the last war, he had made a lasting indictment of its brutality and idiocy in his novel *War*. To-day he found pacifism would no longer meet the present situation. We sat and talked, while a young German played

Chopin and Mozart, or the stirring German workers' songs, forbidden in his own country.

In sharp contrast to the ascetic-looking German novelist was the veteran leader of the Black-Sea mutiny, André Marty. Tall, with a large black beret and flowing cloak, the moustaches of an English sergeant-major adorned the red face of a well-fed mayor. The French Communist leader is cast in the heroic mould; Rostand would have loved him. He would consume innumerable cups of black coffee and had an inexhaustible supply of jokes, many against himself. He was idolized by the French contingent.

I mentioned the shortage of greens to Marty. He scribbled a note. Two days later, every man received a lemon as part of his ration. Cabbages also appeared on the menu.

The English were given a day's leave on our sixth day in Albacete and ten pesetas each to spend. Romilly and myself were lunching in a café in the market square, when a young Anarchist joined us.

"Ingleses? bueno! You would like to see our town? Let me show you round. First we shall have a pretty señorita."

We protested, he was too kind, we had no mind for professional charmers. This he took as an encouragement—we must accompany him, he knew only the best houses.

Albacete's brothel quarter lies behind the market

square. Here are no gilded palaces of pleasure. A number of squalid white cottages are clustered round a large dirty grey building. From it, a trail of blood marks the dirty white mud of the road; it is the town abattoir. Even in winter, the smell is considerable. As I stood gazing, fascinated by the sordid horror of the place, a stream of troops entered the square from the opposite side of the slaughter-house. They broke up into groups of twenty or thirty and disappeared into the tiny house. Occasionally the inhabitants, overawed by their numbers, refused to open their usually hospitable doors. The troops would patiently knock until an angry head was pushed from one of the windows. "Robbers, scoundrels, unclean ones—go back to your mothers, they will sleep with you for nothing!" The soldiers were in no wise offended. They had been paid and showed their money. Sometimes the window would slam and door remain closed, more often the harpy would come down and admit about a dozen, the rest, still hopeful, would wander on to the next house.

Our guide was full of apologies. It was unexpected, not an empty house could be found. Romilly and I were very relieved. He would meet us tomorrow—he knew such a woman!

As we walked out of the street, we saw a group of small children playing with their rag dolls. Above

them was a Madonna in a niche of the doorway, from the wall of the slaughter-house hung a tattered bill advertising a long-forgotten bull-fight.

In the main street, we ran into David Marshall. "Come on you fellas, parade at once, something's happened, all the barracks are going!" From our cuartel, we marched over to the huge cavalry barracks on the other side of the city. In its spacious square were about six thousand men, mostly in civilian clothes. A few wore a uniform that was new to me. The jacket was brown corduroy, loosely cut, in the style of a lumber-jacket, the trousers of the same material were full-cut and strapped at the ankles. Black or khaki berets completed the ensemble.

In less than three hours, the whole six thousand were fitted out from head to foot in these uniforms. We passed through a long room, once the quartermasters' stores; at points an orderly handed us a separate item. It was just like a Woolworth luncheon-service where one starts by grabbing an *hors-d'œuvre* and ends with the cheese. The final item was a brand new English service rifle, bayonet and ammunition belt. I got a strange thrill to feel my rifle. "Keep it clean, your life may depend upon it." I remembered my O.T.C. sergeant, it seemed very unreal then; now it had a new significance.

We dressed quickly and set about removing the grease that covered our guns. Birch, Bill and myself,

as old hands, showed the others the bolt mechanism, sight adjustment, how to lift the magazine in and out, and to use a "pull through".

We were marshalled in our companies in the square. The English group was reinforced by six others, led by Joe. "And now boys, a bloody funeral oration, them froggies can't miss a speech." There was a sudden hush over the crowd of men, even Joe was silenced. André Marty and several others stepped out on to the balcony.

"Comrades! I salute you. Behind you are your homes, your families and your women. In front of you lies the task of making history, not with speeches and resolutions, but with your arms. That many among us have been pacifists will not deter you, a blow now may free civilization for ever from the curse of Fascism."

He raised his hand to quieten the roar of applause.

"Here in the battlefields of Spain are no Croix de Guerre to be won, we have no stocks of Victoria Crosses for the widows of dead heroes. Be brave, my comrades, but no false heroics; we are here to kill Fascists not to commit suicide in front of them."

The speeches concluded, we left our baggage, civilian clothes and old uniforms, in the barracks. Each parcel being checked in, we then marched to the station. Romilly managed to slip away while we stood lined up in the yard. He was just in time to get back with

his water-bottle filled with wine, as we boarded the train with a rattling of billy-cans and bayonets.

Our journey through the night was slow. Bread and sardines composed our supper. The wine was heavy and sweet, we slipped off our boots and slept. We woke to see a wayside station through a drizzle of rain. It was a small village, normally peopled by peasants and a few farmers, war had altered this. Outside the station was a long train of lorries and motor-coaches; steel-helmeted troops patrolled the streets. As we marched to the school-house, which served as a clearing-station, we noticed camouflaged tanks looking like prehistoric toads, being fuelled and overhauled by their crews. Armoured-cars, wicked looking guns poking from their turrets, more efficient than those the Anarchists had created, were drawn up in the village square. This was beginning to look like a war. After hot food and a few hours' rest, we were bundled into the lorries; the rain had ceased. Three planes drew near and passed over our heads. There was a little excitement, but fortunately they were our own scouts.

From two in the afternoon until twelve at night, we sat and stood, forty of us, in an open lorry. Whatever criticism may be used against Russian manufacture, their lorries are incredibly good. We rattled over the bumpy country roads, the engine running perfectly.

The villagers turned out, *en masse*, to cheer us.

Wine, fruit, vegetables and even chickens were passed up to us by the peasants. Even those who were so poor that their daily allowance was a plate of beans, handed us acorns which we gravely took, with thanks. Tanned peasants, with faces dried and creased by the weather, sat on their donkeys with raised fists as we rumbled by.

C H A P T E R S E V E N

"The Moors are Coming!"

IT was after twelve when we finally stopped in Chinchon near the Toledo road. The last twenty miles had been through heavy rain and an icy wind. All officers and men were fed to the teeth. The local Popular Front committee were apologetic. We had not been expected until to-morrow. No billets were ready—the church was empty, there were some barns which were dry; we might sleep there. The men were drafted off to various shelters. We were last on the list. We stood shivering and miserable on the town plaza. Rain soaking through our boots, there was no more room.

Max, our German officer, led us back to the local hotel. This of course was filled with regular Spanish officers and men. Here, praise to the gods, they had hot coffee and cognac. The hotel manager pointed out a house near at hand which was empty. In five minutes, we were all inside. Joe, happy again, had a huge fire burning in the hall. There was a rush to secure the sofas and beds for the night.

Romilly managed to get an inhospitable wooden

bench and a cushion in an upstairs room; I was less lucky. I noticed what looked like a recess. But on close examination I discovered a small door leading into a low-ceilinged room. A faint light from the hotel offices filtered through the bars of a single window. A good-sized bed was against one side of the room, on the other, in darkness, I could see what appeared to be a couch. There was a musty smell and I opened the window to air the room while I fetched Romilly. The bed was ample for two.

The next morning sunlight was streaming in through the bars of the window, making a pattern of squares on the white-washed wall, above our heads was a crucifix, the only decoration the room possessed. The sofa was covered with a white sheet, rush-mats were laid over the floor. Here was peace and rest; here the lady of the house must have retired to meditate upon her sins.

After we had dressed, Romilly pointed to the sofa.

"Let's dump our rifles and kit here until we move," he pulled away the sheet, then stopped in shocked horror. He had uncovered a waxy face, its eyes were fixed on the ceiling, its mouth hung open. The musty smell came back to me and I felt very sick. Death was still a novelty.

The whole of the next day was spent in Chinchon. It was indescribably poor; people stood in queues outside

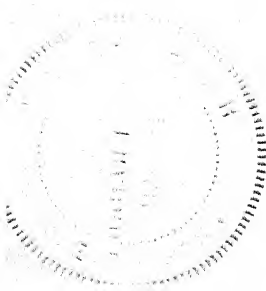
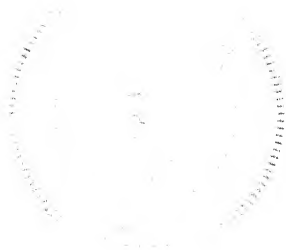
the few shops that remained open. Peasants would pull aside their slow patient oxen to allow a tank to rumble down the road; women carrying their washing baskets on their heads, would stop to watch our anti-aircraft battery camouflaging their guns and lorries. Motor-cycle dispatch-riders tore up the narrow main street to the army headquarters.

The next night we moved the mattress and left the corpse in sole possession. No one was allowed to undress; every man received 250 rounds of ammunition, a first-aid kit, and a day's rations—raisins, dried meat and bread. Romilly and myself had taken the precaution of filling our water-bottles from the wine cask we found in the cellar. At four the next morning we were wakened by a bugle in the square, five minutes later we were ready. The ammunition felt as though it weighed a ton. In addition to our rifles the English company was issued with two Lewis guns, they were taken over by Birch and Bill. Jerry, our lone American, was very interested in the light machine-guns. "Christ sake! nice neat sewing-machines." He was like a proud parent with a new offspring. No one knew much about Jerry. He had drifted into our company, his antecedents were vague, his politics even vaguer.

Once more we were aboard our lorries packed like sardines. Like a huge chain the whole of the mobile column moved off. It was a thrilling experience as we tore through the cold night air. The road, at times,



PREPARING TO WELCOME THE FASCISTS



ran straight ahead into the darkness, or would wind itself round the mountain passes. Ahead of us and behind was a long trail of lights.

“This is a rear attack on the Fascist forces besieging Madrid. If successful it will save the city. You will be supported by tanks and planes. Follow your officers and you’ll get through all right. *Rot Front!*”

We were drawn up in a sunken road; nothing could be seen other than the blue sky behind and the Flemings ahead of us. The boom of heavy artillery sent waves of sound echoing above our heads. Everyone wondered what lay beyond that ridge and blue skyline.

“Forward attack in open formation—five metres apart.” The order in French, German, Dutch and Italian passed down the line. It was an indescribable sensation when I first reached the top of the ridge and saw the city of Madrid in the distance. A huge column of smoke rose from the burning Montaña barracks, the boom of the cannon was much clearer. Of the enemy there was no sign, below us in the sun there was a small village lying in the bend of a river. There was not a sign of life in our first objective. Away on our left, our tanks could be seen moving forward, behind them cavalry. One had a strange impression of unreality; it all looked like a toy-window display.

We had advanced for two hours, carrying in turn the cases of machine-gun ammunition. The rope handles

cut into the palms of our hands, but it did not seem to matter, the nervous excitement dulled the pain. We could now read the sign outside the village shop, a cat was sunning itself on a doorstep; nearer—still no sign of life. Safety-catches were thumbled back. We halted. An advance guard reported the village deserted, an hour's rest was declared.

Romilly and Bill led the way into a house. The confusion was incredible, drawers had been ransacked, clothes strewn everywhere and tables upturned. Pathetic ornaments were in pieces, a model torero lay on its side. "Keet, come here, man," Bill was standing on the bedroom doorway, I looked past him into the room—there was even more confusion than in the first one. Then I saw what he was staring at. Half across the bed lay a woman, her clothes obscenely high; her throat was a great red gash, her dress ripped down to her waist revealed another wound above her breast. This was our first experience of the Moors. Across the front of the cottage spread the slogan: "*Viva España.*"

We ate our meal in what had been the village inn. For drink we had cognac mixed with Anis. Even after half a pint of this potent mixture, I still felt strangely sober. The Fascists had left in a hurry—coffee in the kitchen was still warm; food prepared for a meal, and an officer's hat and cloak left hanging on the wall.

Two kilometres beyond the village was a hill topped by a fort; this had once been a famous monastery

visited by the Kings of Spain. We advanced again towards the hill, when Birch suddenly realized that Joe and Mulligan were missing; no one had seen them since we had entered the village. I was sent back to try and find them. There was not a sign of them anywhere, a heavy fire had broken out from the fort.

When I hurried back, the English company were nowhere in sight, a Polish division with heavy machine-guns was advancing, away from the fort on my right. I was undecided whether to join them or not, the fighting round the fort sounded most unhealthy. Fortunately, I made up my mind to look for the others. For half the way I was under the cover of a long ridge, I passed an emergency dressing-station, stretchers and bandages laid out in readiness. The ridge ended, I came under fire for the first time in my life.

Zwiss—zwiss, leaves flew from the bush I sheltered behind. Bruno's words in Port Bou came back as I ran bent double. I felt a deadly cold fear inside my stomach: I must reach the others, I don't want to die alone. A man ran stumbling past me, holding a bleeding shoulder. The bushes ended. There was a gap over an open ploughed field, beyond was an olive grove. The trees looked incredibly far away. The fort drew me on like a loadstone.

The whining hisses became more frequent. I was convinced each bullet had a personal venom. I fixed

my eyes on the trees and ran. The soil spurted up in little clouds all round me, zwiss, zwiss, zwiss, the machine-gun bullets screamed just above my head. Sobbing with relief, I flung myself under a tree. Sweat soaked me. I took a long pull at my flask and felt better. The cover was good—the tough trunks would stop any bullet.

There I lay, firing from behind my tree until darkness fell. Fire from the fort slackened and I was able to get to the advance positions. The English were resting in a captured trench. David Marshall had a bullet through the foot; no one else was touched. Losses had been heavy. As we crouched in the trench, we could hear the groans of the wounded and dying.

The lull was short, our tank guns began hammering the fort, a tower broke into flames. The din was increased by hand grenades thrown from the walls on to our troops who were crawling up the slopes. Romilly and I kept together as we advanced; suddenly I felt a terrific blow on my thigh, it numbed me, my left leg felt wet and sticky. "Christ, I'm hit!" I rolled over. Romilly looked for the wound. Suddenly, he sat back and roared with laughter—a bullet had hit my flask: the life blood I had felt ebbing away was wine.

We had completely lost touch with the others. It was bitterly cold, we had had enough of war for one day. It took an hour, crawling on our bellies to reach our lines, the bullets still slapping the earth around us.

The groans of the wounded, the shout of "stretcher-bearers"—it was like a crazy dream. Romilly almost stumbled over a wounded German on a stretcher, the bearer lay a few feet away, a bullet-hole between his eyes. We gave the wounded man wine; together, we got moving with the stretcher.

At every jolt he groaned until one became callous, our one desire was to get away from the fort and get food. We had been attacking for eighteen hours without food or rest. At last we reached the road. "Gosh, he's quiet," Romilly looked closer. "He's dead!"

In the village church a huge fire was burning, coffee and stew tasted better than anything I can remember.

I was in a deep soft bed, I felt a figure beside me, it seized my throat and shook and shook; I woke to find Romilly beside me. "Wake up, you bloody fool, we're retreating, the Fascists have heavy reinforcements." A long stream of men were leaving the village. Ambulances tore up the road towards the hills.

As we joined the retreating procession, we noticed a group at the side of the road, six bodies were laid in a hastily dug ditch, the loose sandy soil was shovelled over them. The burial squad stood at attention with fists raised while Ludwig Renn delivered a short oration. A ragged volley was fired and we all moved off in the early morning sun. It was good to be able to hear that funeral address.

Half a mile back from the road lay a farm-house. We saw a familiar figure running up the cart-track. It was Joe. We walked down to meet him. "Nice bloody war this, leave me and Mulligan with a box of bloody 'and grenades to carry, we got left behind, bin 'ere ever since; we found a barrer this morning when the bloody battle's over."

At the farm-house we found a good fire, before it ham and onions were frying. Joe was a genius for finding food; he would have discovered four-course dinner in the desert. Firing in the village we just left, made us bolt our food. We started back up the road, pushing an antique barrow loaded with grenades.

"Ripe tomatoes, all fresh, all one price!" Joe jolted the load up the cart-track towards the road. "Christ, look," Romilly pointed to the sky, six specks were growing larger every minute until we saw the black Nazi Junkers; they were over the village now. Bo-om! a cloud of smoke and dust went up, two bombs hit the church simultaneously, its tower crashed inward. The whole air was now throbbing with the huge planes coming towards us.

Joe left his "tomatoes" and we fled for the road. There was not an inch of cover near us. Above the roar of the engines, we heard the crack of a machine-gun. The bullets smacked all round us, raising clouds of yellow dust. At any moment we expected to be blown sky-high by a bomb. I heard Joe yelling. An

armoured-car was travelling along the road towards our base. The plane was turning to attack again. The armoured-car passed us. We gave one loud desperate shout—it slowed down and stopped. We piled into the narrow space, bullets spattered against the roof and we were off.

After a meal at the base, Joe and Romilly left to try and find the rest of our company. I waited there in case they should turn up. I was not kept waiting long—a French officer ordered me to join his company. When I protested that I was a member of the English company, he smiled sweetly: "Ah, *mon brave*, we are all good international socialists, what is a nation? we are all brothers—fall in here."

We took up a position on a slope covered with olive-trees, overlooking the Manzanares River. Here we dug ourselves in and waited. It was a superb position commanding the river bridge and the Toledo road. Only one thing our officer had overlooked: that the Fascists might ignore the bridge and swim across to attack higher upstream. When he suddenly saw a squadron of cavalry almost behind us, he was most annoyed: "Zut! this should not be." Unfortunately, it *was*. We left our carefully-dug positions and trailed our guns on the other side.

As the cavalry drew nearer, their turbans became visible. The word went round: "les Marocains!" The Moors were coming! The dead woman on the

bed, their legendary cruelty, "shoot yourself first before capture"—it all flashed through my mind. Again that feeling of unreality, the film would soon be over, I should step out into the lights of Leicester Square, a cup of coffee in Lyons. The machine-gunners were clearing their sights.

I could distinguish the beards of the Moors. I ached to open fire, the horses seemed on top of us. At last the command "Company". I suddenly became quite cool—I watched a wild figure on a white horse over my sights "Fire!" The sudden volley took the Moors unawares. To my surprise and delight my man threw up his arms and tumbled from the saddle. The range was deadly; they must have lost half their numbers killed and wounded, the rest galloped back down the slope, raked by our machine-gun fire.

So far so good, but on the other side of the river were fresh reinforcements. The cavalry divided, half taking the bridge road, the rest crossing higher up to try and outflank us. So accurate was our machine-gun fire, that they could not pass the bridge. Zwing-crash, a column of earth shot up before us, I was covered in dirt. Zwing—the next shell passed over our heads. Crash! the next killed or wounded four of our company. The next man to me saw my white face: "Courage, *mon brave!* it takes twenty shells to kill one man."

The Moors were now attacking on foot from two

sides. A machine-gunner grunted and slumped over his gun, vomiting blood. My comrade took his place. The din was terrific, the Moors were now near enough to use their grenades. We had lost twenty killed and wounded out of sixty. The field-gun had stopped firing, we were too close to one another to distinguish. I felt for another cartridge clip, both my pouches were empty. Between the bursts, I pointed the empty case to the machine-gunner. He pointed to a dead man on my left, I emptied his pouch. He wore a steel-helmet, I stripped it off, it gave me a feeling of security.

The Moors drew closer in, olive branches, reminders of peace and goodwill, fell round us, clipped by their bullets. "Bayonets ready!" We stuck them in the ground beside us ready for a last stand. Now less than half of our company were firing. Dumont our officer had sent for urgent reinforcement. My machine-gunner stopped firing, the last belt was empty.

Behind us we suddenly heard a terrifying yell. It was the same battle-cry that had brought fear to the Spaniards in the Netherlands four hundred years ago. The Moors thinking we were heavily reinforced fell back to the other side of the river. Our relief party of Flemings was small, but it gave us the time we needed to collect our guns and men and retreat to the hills behind us. I looked at my watch, we had

held the position for six hours, it had seemed at most an hour.

Back in our base, hasty preparations were being made for our retreat. Our attack had been successful in its objective. Franco had withdrawn a large section of his troops to meet what appeared to be a threat to cut off the left flank of his army. The new German divisions were held in their big push through the Casa de Campo. Madrid for the present was relieved.

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The next morning we were bombed. Most of the wounded had been evacuated, only about a dozen remained in our temporary hospital. Behind us, from our own lines, came three large bombers flying low. Distinguishing marks are not clear in the Spanish war, they consist in painting the tail and the wing-tips red for Government or black Fascist. We soon identified our neighbours. The scream of a two hundred kilo bomb ended in a crashing roar; a crater was torn in the earth. Men ran for cover in all directions; a pack of dogs rushed round and round in a mad circle of terror. Again that whistling scream that seemed to last for minutes; a column of smoke and flame shot up from the hospital building, steel girders were twisted, as though they were pieces of wire in a child's hand. I lay under a lorry, waiting for the planes to return. A few rifles cracked im-

potently at the raiders. They did not come back. The road to our base led through a gap in the hills, the Polish company returning was caught by the German bombers. Even where I stood half a mile away, the ground shook as six bombs tore great gashes in the earth.

Ambulances raced across the rough track, first-aid men rushed over. Twenty men had been hit, some of them were unrecognizable. The bomb splinters had torn them with a macabre humour. One boy lay on his back threshing the air with his leg, where the other should have been was a quivering bloody stump. In the fork of a tree, another was tightly wedged; he was alive and moaning, when the ambulance men touched him, he gave a high-pitched scream, a blue red tangle of intestines hung from his stomach. We tried to lift one man on to a stretcher—he bent like an old rag doll, his spine had been severed, my arms were soaked in blood. I dared not stop and think or I should go mad. A boy, not more than sixteen, lay grinning at the blue sky as though at a remembered joke, the top of his head was taken off as one opens an egg. Those who were past aid were shot; it was the greatest mercy the ambulance men could have shown.

With two other bearers, I carried in turn a dark handsome Jew, his arm shattered. He was delirious with pain and shock. In between his ravings, he

would croon a song which expressed the melancholy sufferance of his race.

Blood and antiseptics reeked from the dressing-station. Doctor Stephan was working like a man possessed; giving injections, helping with dressings. Every grain of morphine was as precious as gold, it stilled the screams into low moaning or into drugged sleep.

I passed linen and swabs automatically; the white would grow red, the two colours swam before my eyes, everything became black.

C H A P T E R E I G H T

Madrid in Flames

VILLACARNES did not anticipate having over 500 troops quartered in its small white houses. More than a village, it is less than a town. Here we stayed while fresh supplies and instructions were being sent from Chinchon. The inhabitants did their best, but like most Spanish villages in the war area, the shortage was acute. Of the Thaelmann Battalion there was no sign, two lost sheep from the English company turned up, Mulligan and Norman, an ex-undergraduate who had joined us at Albacete.

We quartered ourselves in what had been the priest's house. Norman had acquired an officer's lined overcoat, a steel helmet, and a sack of coffee. We got a good fire burning, all we wanted was something to cook. The peasants had wisely put every hen, pig or goat under lock and key; hungry troops know no law. Armed with my bayonet, I set off for food. A large farm-house set back from the road possessed a number of barns. A big raw-boned Fleming saw me looking at the buildings, we understood one another.

The first barn was empty, from the second we heard

a clucking and scuffling. With a skill born of long practice, my comrade wrang the neck of a hen to the noisy consternation of her sisters. I seized her paramour—his neck would not wring—it was horrible. This was war—with my none too sharp bayonet I severed his head.

Norman and Mulligan were first impressed then derisive, my kill was the father of all cocks. We stewed him for hours, the final result being a substance like calico. The coffee was excellent, it made up for a lot. We walked round to the village hall where food was handed out, hoping for a second meal. Before the headquarters of the Popular Front were cases and cases of shells, all of French origin. An unlucky bomb would blow Villacarnes from the face of the earth.

The committee were friendly, we enjoyed a cognac and cigarettes with them. A high-powered radio was crashing out Government propaganda. Norman had an idea: "Why not get the news from London?" We asked the committee and they agreed. Try as we would we could not tune in the London news, a jazz-band, a talk on domestic economy—then a voice in English: "The rebels have entered Madrid and are fighting their way to the Puerta del Sol, the centre of the city. A Government counter-attack was repulsed with heavy losses." A jazz-band cut in with *Those little things*.

We decided to quit, with Madrid taken and the British Government exulting through its organ, the B.B.C., things looked all washed up. The last three days had made a very bad impression on us, we felt tired and beaten. No one quite knew how to quit. Between us and the nearest port lay 300 miles of motor road. I was for resigning in an official way as a volunteer. The others were against this course as being impracticable: "You can't run an army on those lines, not even a bloody Anarchist army!" "We've got to quit *now* or go back to the battalion or what's left of it," argued Norman.

When we arrived back in Chinchon we learned our battalion had left for Madrid itself, a few hours earlier. We spent the night in Chinchon in an Anis refinery, sleeping on top of one of the huge vats. It was warm, outside the cold was intense and we slept heavily; we woke next morning with splitting headaches with the fumes, it felt as though we had drunk the vat between us. Our legs were most unstable, the refinery rocked in an alarming fashion.

In the town plaza we bought a paper. Streaming across the front page were the headlines: "Madrid is Invincible! Heroes of the International Column Cripple Fascist Attack!" Even allowing for the usual Press exaggeration, it was obvious the city had by no means fallen. This gave rise to a fierce argument, I was for going on to Madrid and resigning there, Norman and

Mulligan were for making for Valencia. We agreed to part company.

The sun had a healing influence—the concentrated horror of the last three days seemed like a bad dream. Chinchon is built on a hillside. The houses rose in terraces above the square, a large red stone church stood on the summit. A red flag flew from its tower, despite this, mass was said every day. The flag had been placed there by the priest himself. I walked down to the Spanish Army headquarters which was situated in an old villa on the outskirts of the town. In its courtyard a fountain was playing, on the walls were lovely old Spanish plates and dishes making a splash of colour against the whitewash. Two or three paintings lined the newly-carved staircase that led to a gallery which ran round the square.

In a corner of the courtyard almost hidden by palms, an operator sat at a radio transmitter. I was led into a beautifully furnished room, an officer shook my hand: "*Salud! Viva la Columna Internacional!*" I explained what I wanted. "*Claro, hombre! We have an empty staff car leaving for Madrid at three o'clock, have you eaten? There is some food to be had in the kitchen downstairs, at three o'clock we shall have the car here.*" He noticed me gazing at the paintings on the walls. "You are interested? I too have a great love for our national art. Come a little before three and I will show some of the beauties of the villa."

My officer was a sympathetic guide, he loved the art of his country, he was not a Communist, to him Franco meant the destruction of the real culture of his people; Hitler would bring his barbarism and what was worse, his mediocrity to Spain. I was surprised at the way art treasures were left lying in their glass cabinets. "Is this the villa of a good Republican?" I asked him. "No, señor, the owner was the Marquis de Urralles, a well-known Falangist (Fascist)."

"But all this stuff, as you know, it is priceless!"

"It belongs to the people, why should they destroy it? Its place is in the museums, where all can see its beauty."

Drawn up outside the villa was a large Hispano Suiza. My officer explained to the chauffeur my position and that I was to be taken to Madrid. As we started, the officer slipped a card into my hand, on it a name and address. "He will help you if necessary—he is a good friend of mine."

My driver was a congenial fellow with a good voice, he was delighted to find in me a fellow *flamenco* enthusiast. As the great car tore along the mountain roads, he sang at the top of his voice, "*Las mujeres son muy malas—todas*," ending on an incredible note. From the *canto flamenco* he passed to the *canto hondo*, and to the Sevillanas. "*Le gusta esto?*" He would turn to me for approval. I was sorry I had shown my enthusiasm, time after time, I felt our skidding

tyres would throw us over one of the mountain bends. He was so lost in his art that he quite forgot he was driving the car. I breathed again when we reached the straight road once more. This was one of the main arteries of Madrid. Huge food lorries rumbled past, we saw truck after truck of field-guns going up to the front. Singing loads of troops waved and saluted as we passed them. Every few kilometres, an armed guard would stop us to examine our papers and the number of our car. Each village provided its own barricade, every able-bodied man not at the front took a spell of guard. In some places browned peasant women waved us to stop with their shot-guns or ancient carbines, as we drew near.

Piled against trees, overturned in ditches with their wheels pointing to the sky, were wrecked cars and lorries; these we passed with depressing regularity. I counted nearly eighteen in thirty kilometres. In the suburbs of Madrid we saw the first real barricades. These were solid affairs many feet thick and built with paving-stones. A booming rumble I knew too well told me the front was near. It was almost dark when I finally arrived in the Gran Via and said farewell to my driver.

My drive through the mountain air had left me with an appetite, with my last few pesetas I bought a meal in a café. The waiter asked for my militia card, without it I could not be served, food was strictly

rationed. After a steak and potatoes and wine I walked up the Gran Via to find a barracks to spend the night in.

The street was dark as a pit. I had to pick my way with care. I had not gone a hundred yards when I heard the drone of a plane above me. "Pop pop-pop, pop-pop" an anti-aircraft gun opened up near by and flaming tracer bullets tore into the night sky, bursting like brief stars above me. Dropping from the sky was a flaming object. I thought it was a plane hit by our gunners but as it came lower I noticed it was followed by others. The first hit the road a few yards away and burst into a brilliant white flame. Others landed in different parts of the city. Madrid was as light as day.

Now the whine overhead became a roar, the earth shook as the first bomb landed tearing a great crater in the Puerta del Sol. I threw myself flat in the gutter, people ran blindly in terror first in one direction then another. A girl in a light raincoat ran past me. "*Aqui! Aqui!* Down!" I screamed at her. She threw herself beside me in the gutter, a car tore up the road with an anti-fire squad, there was a scream and a roar—the car disappeared in a sheet of white flame, pieces of metal tore the stone building above us like plaster, broken glass rained down on us. I was thankful for my steel helmet which covered the back of my neck.

The white light of the flares was now superseded by huge columns of red flame leaping from the doomed buildings. Ambulances with sirens screaming rushed to the aid of the wretches trapped in burning ruins. A woman ran past us down towards the crowded workers' district. Two militiamen pulled her into a door. She fought like an animal: "*Niños míos!* I must find my children!" She tore herself away and rushed half laughing half crying out of sight.

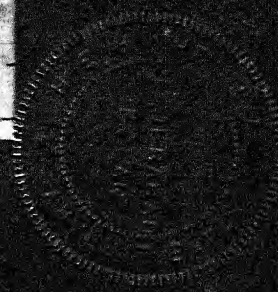
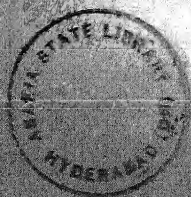
For a long time after the last explosion shook the ground, I dared not move. The roar of the German and Italian bombers had died away. The silence was only broken by the crackle of the burning buildings and an occasional rumble as walls or roofs fell in, Madrid was like a city of death.

As I stood up, the broken glass fell from me in a tiny shower. I suddenly remembered my companion in the light raincoat. "Are you all right?" I helped her up, she was pale but unhurt. Over a cognac in a near-by bar she told me her name. I gathered she worked in the telephone building. Neither of us were in the mood for pleasantries but I could not help commenting on her blue eyes and fair hair. "The señorita is not typical."

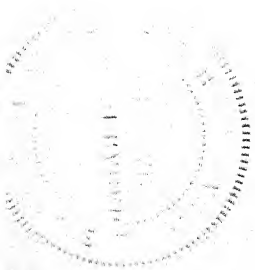
"Jansen was my mother's name—she was a Swede."

Elvira was worried about my lack of accommodation.

"It is too late to reach a caserne, and too far—your



HUGE COLUMNS OF FLAME LEAPING FROM THE DOOMED BUILDINGS



Brigade are at Fuencarrel—ten kilometres away. Can you not stay at a hotel?"

"My last two pesetas paid for our cognac."

"Then let me help you." She pulled out two *duros*. "Give it to me when we meet again, here is my telephone number." She gave me a card. Already as we walked up the Gran Via, breakdown squads were clearing the streets of wreckage. At the top of the street leading to the Puerta del Sol, we stopped to watch the three huge fires. The Café Madrid, famous cosmopolitan resort, was a mass of flames. It was here that General Mola announced to the world he would be drinking coffee on November the first. His German friends were eight days late with their civilizing mission. The famous market was a sea of flame. The fire brigade was helpless against the skill of German chemists; a huge corner block was burning on every floor. Militia had already cordoned off the streets round the Puerta del Sol.

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In the morning the fires were still burning. From my hotel window, I watched the pillars of smoke rising. The hotel manager directed me to El Pardo where our column was stationed.

The battalion headquarters was in the aristocratic Buenavista Golf Club. I walked across a smooth green, divided by shady trees, these served to cover two tanks and a number of Russian lorries. On my

left in the morning sun were the snow-covered Guadarramas. So lovely did they look that it was hard to realize the 5th Regiment was waging a deadly struggle on their majestic heights.

The club-house was a hive of activity. Telephone lines had been laid to the front, runners came and went. An officer, a Dane, directed me to my company in the Playa. Here was an extraordinary sight, the Playa is Madrid's Lansbury's Lido; a large café built on ultra-modern lines looks across a boating and swimming lake. With the front line less than a mile away, the English were engaged in a boat-race across the lake. I recognized Joe and Romilly in the lead, long Sid towering out of a small canoe, was a good second, Birch and Bill followed behind.

"Hi, you bastards!" I shouted at the top of my voice. Sid turned to look, it was his undoing—Jock and Messer, a newcomer, piled into him.

While poor Sid was drying his clothes, we swapped experiences. So far not a single Englishman had been killed or even wounded since David Marshall was hit in the foot.

Romilly was jubilant. He had made a great find in the road-house—three bottles of Pym's No. 1! These he and Joe had hidden against an hour of need. I could give no news of Mulligan and Norman. To Messer, an Edinburgh University student and great friend of Norman's, I confided what had happened.

"Christ! I don't blame him, it's just one hell of a war."

"Why don't you quit?"

Messer thought for a moment. "You're not a Party member—you wouldn't understand. I just can't walk out."

That night we moved into the University City, here the Fascists were concentrating their big drive for Madrid. Stationed on the outskirts, we spent the night in the trenches. Any romance war may still have held for me disappeared. No romantic is so hot-blooded that he can survive the damp chill of a night in a dug-out. By twelve o'clock I was so tired I could not keep awake; also I was so cold I could not sleep. Never had any night in my life seemed so long.

Nights were not always dull. The shot of a nervous sentry would start an alarm. "The Fascists are coming!" We would tumble out of dug-outs, trench mortars would thunder, shells scream over our heads in a nervous barrage, machine-guns churn the mud. Then it would die down and cease completely. The stillness was often more frightening in its suggestion of the unknown. One night we were given bright metal canisters, heavy with destruction. From house to house from trench to trench the warfare would pass. Our job was to take a red building on the outskirts held by Reichswehr and Moors.

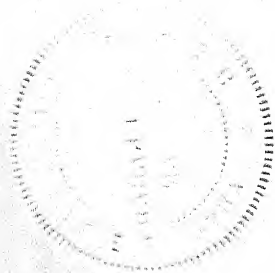
To support us came a squad from the Czech

Battalion, in the dark we had to attack from two sides, the Czechs on one side and ourselves on the other. This went off according to plan except for a slight hitch. The Czechs mistook their side of the house. We were so near we could hear the guttural German of the garrison. Suddenly, right behind us in the dark we saw the dull glow of the cigarettes used to light the bomb fuses. Red sparks flew over our heads "Down for f . . . s sake." We lay dead flat. There was a roar as the eight grenades exploded, blowing away half the wall. This signalled a storm of machine-gun fire from the position which the Czechs should have silenced. Our own gunners realizing that something was wrong, opened up. We lay between the cross fire, the air singing with lead, the vicious slaps told us how near the shots were coming.

After an age, the firing ceased. We got back to our trenches with our bombs intact. The blunder was due to language misunderstanding, this was only one instance of the enormous difficulties an international force must cope with. The Reichswehr had an advantage here, regular units were used and commanded by their own officers while the Italians were in the same position.

Having been denied the advantage of a university education, it was with a feeling of curiosity and respect that I entered Madrid's College of Philosophy. Plato, Spinoza, Aristotle and Voltaire looked down on





a strange scene. A course of practical Marxism was in progress. The lecture-room in which students had gathered to hear Ortega y Gasset lecture in his precise syllabic style, was filled with uniformed troops. Burnt cordite killed the musty smell of books; ammunition in cases was piled against the wall, groups of Italians were sniping through the windows at the Fascists in the building opposite. Occasionally a stray bullet would send up a shower of plaster and dust.

Books are the armour of intellect; here they provided a more physical protection. Shells and trench mortars had torn a great breach in one part of the walls. The gap had been filled; breast high was piled the knowledge of centuries, massive tomes taken from the library. Just as the Bibles given Johnny Jones's by their mothers stopped the German bullets in the last war, to-day a *Dictionnaire Philosophique* provided as effective a cover. Holding such a position gave me the feeling of participating in a mad lottery with death and mutilation as the prizes. Shells would tear through the walls, bringing the awards to the unlucky player. The odds varied; mainly, I calculated they were in my favour. Death appeared to work on a definite law of averages, chance decided one's position on the list.

My O.T.C. experience stood me in good stead. Why every intelligent Communist rails against the territorial regiments instead of taking advantage of their generous training has always puzzled me. "Force is

the midwife of history," said Karl Marx; to try and fight the Class struggle with paving-stones and plant-pots as opposed to automatic rifles and field artillery seems stupid.

Three of us, two Germans and myself, were given the job of sniping a Fascist position. We were stationed in a modern block of flats near the Model Prison. We posted ourselves on different floors. In an air-raid a corner of the building had been torn away as cleanly as though by a knife. The high explosive left the interior of two flats showing to the street like a doll's house with its front removed. Pictures still hung from the walls, a grand piano balanced with one leg hanging over space. Twin beds lay side by side, it was indeed an Ideal Homes Exhibition. Lord Rothermere could have arranged it no better had he done so personally instead of leaving it to his friends, Hitler and Franco.

The flat I occupied was in excellent taste. From its distempered walls hung drawings by Matisse and Picasso. The carpet was a soft shade of grey and livened by peasant rugs. One side of the wall was filled by a bookcase, above it the bust of a young girl, a Mona Lisa in bronze, smiled into space. It was growing dark; to see the titles of the books I had to turn on a dark shaded lamp, first drawing the heavy curtains. It would have been a little ironic for the sniper to have been sniped.

The power was not cut off. I switched on the electric fire. My rifle and heavy boots seemed strangely incongruous. I left my rifle in a corner and with it my steel helmet. My feeling of awkwardness was increased by a clumsiness acquired with living in one's clothes for days on end, eating from cans, grubbing the mud like a mole for cover.

The owner of the flat must have been a professor in the University, his library included many English and German publications. I opened an illustrated edition of *Pride and Prejudice*. I welcomed Collins like an old friend, it was a sop to sanity. Feeling hungry, I explored the kitchen. If my absent host took care of his spiritual needs, he did not neglect his physical.

The cupboard disclosed bottled breasts of chicken, asparagus, sweet corn, coffee and tinned milk. I had to almost force myself to eat from a plate again. I piled the rest of the tins into my rucksack and a large string bag which I discovered. With a bottle of Napoleon brandy under my arm, I returned to Jane Austen. The intermittent firing which had been going on for most of the evening ceased. Through the stillness of the flats one heard the urgent ringing of telephone bells, anxious inquirers seeking their relations or friends. The flats had been hastily evacuated only three days before the air-raid. The silence began to get on my nerves. I tried a radio-set in the corner—it worked.

I was a little wary of B.B.C. bulletins after my experience at Villacarnes, but any news from beyond the Pyrenees was welcome. It was too early for London's news, I sat listening to "Alhambra Memories", marking the closing of the old theatre. The old music-hall hits coupled with the Napoleon brandy gave me a very emotional half-hour. "Good Nate, everybody, G-o-o-d Nate!" I heard the voice of the Muezzin of Broadcasting House as I sat cleaning my rifle against the morning's work, to restore my sense of reality.

That night, I slept in a bed, in silk pyjamas. Never before in my life had I realized the luxury of a soft bed and the sensation of silk against a skin roughened by coarse cotton. I wound my alarm-clock, switched off the bedside lamp and slept.

I was awakened by a shell which exploded in the flat below me, it was almost ten o'clock. Germany produces more efficient shells than alarm-clocks. I waited for the next reminder, none followed. I was sorry to leave my magnificent pyjamas, despite the orthodoxy of their colour, they would, I felt, be frowned on in the trenches. In the kitchen as I prepared breakfast, I noticed a cage. In it was a very dejected-looking canary, still living. It had reached its last grains of seeds, only a few drops of water remained. I left it singing with new energy, its tray full and a large cup of milk in its cage; it would have been kinder to have wrung its little neck.

The day after my visit to the deserted flats, the Fascists began a heavy attack. From a number of Reichswehr deserters we learnt that heavy German reinforcements had been rushed to the Madrid front from Seville. The Reichswehr men gave names and details of the divisions sent. From Cassel had come the Ninth Machine-Gun Battalion and the Twenty-ninth Armoured Defence group, with them were the Ninth Potsdam Infantry and a Friburg regiment. The troops had been told they were due for manœuvres, shipped to Cadiz and thence to Madrid, via Seville.

For two hours an unending supply of shells was poured into our positions. Most of us sat waiting for the next to land among us—not so Joe. He had decided to fry bread. From his dug-out rose a thick column of smoke. Jock crawled over to him. "Put that f . . . g fire out. A' we no having eno' trouble, ye silly daft bastard?" Joe's vocabulary rivalled Jock's. I forgot the shelling as I heard Jock swearing above the crash of the barrage, and from a smoking hole, like the mouth of hell, poured an answering torrent of abuse.

From higher up the line above the tearing crashes I heard a man screaming, I could see one of the French half out of the trench. Two of his comrades dragged him back. The strain had been too much for him. He had gone mad and tried to rush the

enemy trenches single-handed. A chunk of red hot metal tore into the earth a few feet above my head. I lost interest in the upper world and wished to God I had dug my funk-hole deeper. The whole earth shook.

I must get out! I must get out! I remembered cycling through the rain of an English November afternoon, in my pocket the notes taken at the rural district council's annual meeting, praying as I wobbled past pools and pot-holes, for an escape from boredom.

The barrage ceased, our losses were surprisingly low but my nerve was very badly shaken.

C H A P T E R N I N E

I Dine with History

THE army lorry dropped me at Quatro Caminos, from there I took a tram to near the Retiro and walked up towards the War Ministry. Life seemed normal enough. Trams ran to and fro, respectably-dressed citizens, office workers on an indefinite holiday, strolled through the streets. Well-dressed women with shopping baskets on their arms gazed at the shops as they passed, their children would look into the toy-shop windows already dressed for Christmas. Dolls in militia uniform seemed popular, with them were tanks and cannons surrounded by little lead soldiers. As I watched I heard that drone I had come to dread. Above in the sky were nine bombers in perfect formation. The people looked up in curiosity.

"Son los nuestros! Son los nuestros!" (They're ours! They're ours!) shouted a militiaman, the people stood in admiration. I had my doubts, remembered a deserving nephew, and went into the toy-shop. The first bomb landed a few yards away. I heard its warning scream and threw myself on the floor scattering a model farmyard as I did so. A shower of glass

covered the shop, militia dolls, fuzzy Moors, flaxen-haired fairies were flung in all directions. Before I could rise to my feet, the proprietor rushed into the shop.

"*Dios mio!* One month before Christmas. Ah, it is ruin. If only someone would drop bombs on Berlin, they would learn—these blond Moors!" He was almost in tears as he clutched a decapitated doll and waved it as he spoke.

"All my life, I have worked—I have no politics; why do they do this to me—these are not Spaniards—they are German."

I could hear an ambulance bell, I left the unhappy shopkeeper. Outside, surrounded by a small crowd, lay an old man hit by bomb splinters, a trickle of blood running from the corners of his mouth. His head lolled back; he was dead, several of the onlookers crossed themselves mechanically. The crowds resumed their walking as though nothing had happened. The shopkeeper swept the glass from his step.

At the War Ministry, I was shown into a large waiting-room. My letter was taken in to the Foreign Service Bureau. For hours I sat there. I was hungry and tired. After five hours' waiting, I was shown into another large room. Seated with me were a number of officers of the regular army. At three large desks sat important-looking officials stamping and checking piles of documents. Two more hours passed. I

could bear it no longer. I crossed over to one of the officials wearing a colonel's uniform and saluted.

"For seven hours I have waited. I am tired and I am hungry. I have just come from the front."

"Hombre! We are all tired here—we have no rest—what is it you want?"

"I wish to resign from the International Column. I have a letter from my commander to Colonel Garcia."

My fellow-occupant of a red plush sofa was a young man of about twenty-five. I noticed that he wore a heavy gold signet-ring, ornamented with a crest. He was immaculately dressed in a dark-blue suit with a stripe, his shoes were smartly cut in the English style. His face was distinguished, the nostrils wide and sensitive; the blue eyes had a soft look which offset the hard mouth; fair hair gave him an English appearance. He was staring at Goya's portrait of Fernando VII hanging on the opposite wall.

"A great revolutionary artist in spite of himself, he painted the oppressors, but he also portrayed the sufferings of the people." My companion spoke in good English. "You will have seen what excellent propaganda posters his studies of war provide to-day."

The elegant young man intrigued me. "You have always lived in Spain?" I asked.

"I have mainly lived here for the last twenty-four years. My family for over five hundred. I learned

English from my tutor, an Oxford man. I could not help overhearing your conversation, why do you wish to leave the column? You did not expect to find the Fascists and the Government debating with Mr. Lansbury in the chair?"

His hands were beautifully manicured, this irritated me. "What do you know of the front? War, to an onlooker, may lose something of its horror."

"I am not speaking as an onlooker altogether. I served at Irun and Talavera, I am convalescing at present after a slight wound. As a Marxian it may sound heretical, but I love fighting for my people. Each one of you strangers in the International Column is fighting for his own people—therefore for his own country. Perhaps the emotional stimulus is not so strong in your case as in mine. War must be fought on capitalist lines, it is a by-product of the system. Kipling is still the poet laureate of violent death. You must have learned the incredible amount of real sentiment that exists in war. Remove its background and it becomes empty sentimentality."

A uniformed orderly came over to where we were sitting. "Colonel Garcia will see you at ten to-morrow morning." God! another day to wait at least. "Can I help you?" My companion saw the worry in my face. "No, many thanks. But I'd give a great deal for a meal."

"That might be arranged. Wait here." He re-

turned in a few minutes and led me through a series of corridors into a large dining-hall. Tapestried walls absorbed the light from a huge cut-glass chandelier. The table was elaborately laid for about thirty. We were the first to arrive. As the other diners entered in groups, my guide pointed them out to me. A short, white-whiskered bespectacled man in uniform was chatting volubly to a tall heavily-built Spaniard wearing a red tie. The red tie I recognized as Largo Caballero, War Minister and one time building labourer, known to his supporters as the Spanish Lenin. His manner, though strong, seemed a little too subtle as though he had to keep reminding himself that he was a Lenin after all.

His companion hailed my guide as Durante. "That," he whispered to me, "is General Miaja, head of the Madrid Junta de Defensa." This formidable little man, who had successfully united the diverse elements on the Madrid front into a single force, looked like a friendly botanist as he peered short-sightedly up and down the table.

"There is your commander—Emil Kleber," Durante nodded to a thick-set figure, who had seated himself next to Miaja. General Kleber, Canadian born Revolutionary, looked his part. He seemed to tower over the studious-looking Spanish commander. He wore his iron-grey hair closely cropped, he had a bluff military manner which comes with years of soldiering.

His chin was that of a man who gets what he wants done, and at once! Whether Kleber was his name or not, no one knew or cared. Planning the workers' demonstrations in Hamburg when Hitler was nearly anticipated, organizing the Red Army in China into a militant force which has become the only real obstacle against Tokyo's imperialist aggression, or advising Haile Selassie, he has been in the front of the anti-Fascist struggle.

"Hello, Durante! What they gonna give us to eat to-night? It's a change from the canned *kulak* we bin getting at the front." Kleber had not lost his strong Canadian accent.

At the end of the table sat a woman of about thirty-five. She had the manners of a duchess; she spoke in perfect French to an officer on her right, occasionally she would raise her lorgnette to answer a question higher up the table. "That is Margarita Nelken, deputy for Badajoz or what the Germans and Moors have left of it. Half of the original Foreign Legion was killed taking that town. In revenge Franco allowed the Moors to rape the women and girls before their menfolk, those who could not bear it were shot down. The men were hoarded into the bull-ring, five thousand of them. The next morning they asked for food and water. Their guards told them that they would be fed in the afternoon. They were fed with lead from machine-guns, those who tried to climb the barriers

were pushed back by Moorish bayonets. The next day, the Moors finished off the wounded, our legionaries are not children, but they refused to do it."

"How do you know all this is true?" I had heard a crop of atrocity stories, some of which I knew to be untrue. "Some have survived and escaped to our territory; also two famous journalists entered Badajoz at the time and they wrote what they saw in their papers—enough of horrors." The white-coated waiter served us with delicious lamb-cutlets which followed a cream of chicken soup and fried fingers of sole. Our wine was a Bordeaux of excellent vintage.

The conversations going on around us were in half a dozen different languages. A dark, languid-looking beauty chatted with Kleber in Russian, she spoke to Durante in French: "Does your friend know anything of Vincent Sheean?" I shook my head. "Such a pity, he should be here now. We met last in China—so long ago."

Largo Caballero pointed to an empty seat at the table. "Where is Elvira? Why is she not at dinner?" The waiter answered him: "Her food is served in her office, she asks to be excused, she is too busy."

"Ah, what a woman!" he turned to General Miaja. "Night and day she works, she is not human. Since we moved to Valencia, she had taken on the work of three ministries here in Madrid."

"Who is Elvira?" I asked Durante. He changed the

topic abruptly to modern English poetry, which he abhorred. I had an awkward feeling of having made a *faux pas*. It passed off in a heated discussion on the merits, or demerits, of W. H. Auden and Cecil Day Lewis. My curiosity was not lessened by his unexpected shying away from the name of Elvira.

"You had better travel back with Kleber and myself to the barracks to-night, and return here to-morrow."

Outside the Ministry of War was the general's car, a large Lincoln saloon. We climbed into the back.

"Gee, I'm that tired, I'm gonna sleep all to-morrow and leave the colonels to carry out orders," Kleber yawned.

Through the back window I could see the outline of an armoured-car, across Kleber's knees lay a Winchester rifle, the general took no chances. The Castellar was black save for isolated patches of light from the uncurtained windows of a large villa. "I'd like to put a shell into those bastards," growled Kleber.

"Why don't you?" I asked. The armoured-car seemed quite capable.

"Because, my child, it is the German Embassy and under diplomatic protection. The Embassies here in Madrid are the most God-damn racket that ever happened," the general groaned. "Gosh, my feet hurt."

"It's your own fault," said Durante, "it's the third pair of boots you've had in a fortnight, you're a regular Goering about the feet."

I spent the night in a delightful villa near Buena-

vista, sleeping in the dormitory with a dozen of the cheeriest, toughest looking boys I have ever set eyes on. These were Kleber's picked bodyguard. At that time precautions such as I had seen seemed unnecessary, I had yet to gain my experience with the fifth column.

If Franco had behind him a substitute Goering in General Faupel, he lacked a Goebbels. In a broadcast, he was tactless enough to boast that when his four columns entered Madrid, a fifth would come from the city to aid it. The Government responded with the slogan: Wipe out the fifth column! How many Fascists were in this terrorist group may never be known. They waged a deadly war by day and night. A normal looking car with its Government pass, might suddenly blaze with machine-gun fire and disappear into the night leaving the pavement strewn with dead and wounded. An air-raid alarm would give them an opportunity to throw a grenade from a high building into the street below as the people would crowd into the tubes for shelter.

The Government with an eye on foreign opinion had been lenient with many suspected of Fascist leanings, but with Franco's publicity they settled down to wipe out the terrorists with a merciless vigour. Any unauthorized person found carrying arms or explosives was summarily executed.

The express lift tore up to the seventh floor, leaving my stomach somewhere about the fourth. This sensation did not leave me when I entered a long, low room in Madrid's skyscraper, the Telefonica. In the carefully-shaded light of the desk lamps, the operators were sober watchers at a wake. Round a table sat four figures engrossed in watching a toy train whirr round its circular track. They spoke very little and in low voices. A tall figure, with his back to me, was engaged in winding the train for its endless journeyings. Each time it stopped, little piles of money would change hands.

An operator crossed to the island of light and tapped the tall one, "Your call, m'sieur." They left the table and sat at the switchboard. "This is Sefton Delmer, Madrid. To-day has been a quiet one for Madrid. The city is licking its wounds after last night's bombardment. . . . Good night." The flow of carefully-enunciated syllables ceased. As my eyes became accustomed to the darkness, I noticed half a dozen camp-beds drawn up in the deeper shadow of the wall. Silent, undistinguishable figures were stretched out upon them.

Apart from the whirring of the train, nothing disturbed the silence. Suddenly a deep voice boomed out over the room. "*Je commence, je commence!*" I looked over to its source, in the light of the switchboard sat a small but striking figure. Under a wide

black hat, brilliant black eyes peered from behind a majestic beard, accentuated by a high white Gladstone collar. A black cravat completed the Murger ensemble. He delivered his dispatch with passion and in a fine oratorical style.

A corpse on one of the beds stirred. "Good God, nine-thirty, and not a bloody line yet." Here was a friendly voice. I had not dared interrupt the endless game of trains, but here seemed a possible chance of information.

"My name's Scott Watson, I'm looking for Delaprée or Minifee."

"Mine's Cox—*News Chronicle*, you're out here for the Press?"

"Not officially; at the moment, I'm the vanguard of the post-War unemployed, I resigned from the International Column to-day."

"It's good to see someone new, we're all getting a little stale after weeks of it. Food's bad, anyway. Beans and dried cod at the Embassy, it's not much better at the best hotel. We're almost out of fresh meat and greens. I hope to get my call through soon, then we'll have a drink."

"Thanks awfully, but I've got to find a bed for to-night first."

"We're all living in state in His Majesty's Embassy, why not come along—you've got a passport?"

"Yes, but what about my militant past?"

"Why mention it? You're not in the army now, anyway. Here's my call."

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A drunken militiaman sat next to me in the crowded bar, he was alive with bombs—six bright steel cylinders were strapped to his waist. His arm was around the shoulders of a Moorish whore, she would wearily push it away and the human bomb would sway alarmingly on his high stool. The Miami bar, once the haunt of Madrid's bright and young, had undergone a change. From above the well-stocked shelves a languid and naked negress sprawling on a desert island gazed through the smoke-blue air at the miscellany below.

Officers on leave were sunk in the deep intimacy of the heavily-upholstered sofas. At the black and chromium tables sat the foreign population—journalists, business men, spies and secret police agents. The barman endlessly agitated a silver cocktail shaker, whatever state the food-supply was in, there was no drink problem in Madrid. A blonde was throwing poker dice, before her lay a growing pile of notes and silver, her partner looked bored but went on throwing. The blonde's winnings grew, her partner looked even more bored. A waiter asked us if we would join Señor Delmer's table.

Cox introduced me to Sefton Delmer and his two companions. Allwork, Reuter's correspondent, was tall and fair, Sandhurst in looks and accent. Chubb

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wore his hat on the back of his head, it looked as though it had always been there. "You haven't got a pint of real bitter in your pocket, I suppose? If these Spaniards had a decent drop of Burton, they'd win their war. It's worse than Abyssinia where you got a nice 'wop steak' once in a while."

Delmer looked sorrowfully at Chubb. "Empires may totter, a people be sold into bondage, Rome reddens the skies; as long as our friend is not deprived of his steak and kidney pudding and his glass of ale, God's in his Heaven. Look at me getting plumper every day; to think what I spent on a slimming cure only six months ago."

"Wouldn't you like a roast and two veg. when you get back to the old Embassy," said Chubb. "'Course you would, so would we all. Beans and eggs, I could spit!"

The bored young man in horn-rimmed spectacles left the blonde and joined us, I was introduced to Stubbs-Walker of the *Daily Herald*. I afterwards learnt that the bored manner meant nothing, it was permanent; an unexpected shell burst or a panic in a crowded tube, left him genuinely unmoved. Cox had been talking to Delmer. "Look here, you'd better come back to the Embassy, it's too late now, but we'll present the new boy to the head in the morning."

"You'd better have some official status," Delmer thought for a moment, "I need an assistant—does fifty

pesetas a day seem reasonable?" I could only nod my head.

His Majesty's Embassy in Madrid had an impressive though plain exterior. The high gates of solid iron were in keeping with the solidity of the British flag which flew above them. On the gate was a white notice telling anxious friends and relatives that the British Government could not secure the release of anyone from prison. Inside its protective walls were housed a collection of humans truly representative of that great Empire in all its variety, if not in its proportions. Perhaps rightly so, the predominant language was Spanish. India was represented by a turbaned Mohammedan missionary. To the untutored Spanish people, a turban signified a Moor. After several ugly demonstrations, he decided to take shelter under the imperial banner. Four negro students from Sierra Leone had returned to their lectures in the University only to find the two partisan forces equally divided in their two faculties.

The Gibraltar contingent, numerically the largest, seemed to comprise one family who spoke no English. Their Patriarch was a trainer of performing dogs. The rest were made up of sons and daughters and a handful of grandchildren. In better times, the father had supported the whole brood, they never ventured outside of the iron gates, seldom even into the Embassy gardens. They had the pallor of potatoes that had been too long

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in a dark cellar. Despite the efforts of Embassy officials to transfer them to safer quarters, they refused to move. "My all is here, I cannot move," was the inevitable answer of the Patriarch who refused to budge an inch.

Any stray dogs that passed the open gates he would entice in, until one of the guards was bitten in the thigh by a mad collie, and dogs were barred.

Here, as everywhere else, political sympathies were divided. Any discussions on these lines were "not done", or to the dagoes (i.e. anyone of inferior nationality, not British) taboo. Eagerly the inmates would question the journalists on the progress of the war; each one reacting in accordance with his or her personal views. The majority were united in a common dislike of the journalists as being "favoured" and "privileged". A private room allotted to the Press, their late hours and non-attendance for official meals gave rise to this.

When the rebellion broke out, Sir Esmond Chilton and most of the ambassadors of the Great Powers, were "summering" at San Sebastian. With few exceptions they all crossed the frontier for Hendaye, and there remained. In the place of Sir Esmond, plump old Etonian Ogilvie Forbes was sent to Madrid, with him as assistant father to the extraordinary flock was Mr. C. Scott.

To say that sex was "not done" would be an over

statement, but it certainly was taboo. Male and female were segregated into separate dormitories. I am sorry to say that there was rather a lot of priggish, any irregularity in the behaviour of the Press was at once reported to the head prefect by the Gibraltese. Delmer waged an incessant vendetta with these children of the rock. They replied in their simple way by keeping him waiting for his breakfast coffee (they were officiating in the kitchen), leaving the window behind his bed open in the hope that pneumonia might ensue, or by drinking the Press whisky which was a doubly satisfactory vengeance.

Delmer commissioned a white-haired old man to teach him Spanish, this was prompted by his language restrictions in insulting the loathed Gibraltese. This aged teacher was a pathetic figure, he possessed one extraordinarily good-looking daughter of about eighteen. Now there were no visible traces of that virility which had lasted so late in life. He was never without an old black hat, a worn but carefully brushed overcoat; his declining sight necessitated blue spectacles. He would wander about the Embassy, peering at everyone in a mild curiosity; more venturesome than most of the inmates, he would take short walks in the local streets. He could not have been a very good teacher, he confided in Delmer that he taught grammar "by ear".

Old School Tie over All

I TOOK a penny tube to the front, with Delmer my newly-acquired chief. At the head of every street leading from the city barricades were going up. Men, women and children joined in the work of piling up sandbags and tearing up the paving-stones. These we passed and came out into the wide and deserted square before the model prison. A laundry van lay on its side near the middle of the square, near by a large saloon car stood as though waiting for its owner. We walked over to it, closer too, one saw the irregular gashes torn in the bodywork by shell splinters. The cushions were still wet with blood. Still no sign of life. The front was uncannily quiet. Far away we heard the remote "pop pop pop" of a machine-gun.

"Pang-pang"—sparks flew from the road a few yards away. It was impossible to tell where the fire came from. Despite his shock, Delmer covered the square in record time. The vicious sound of the ricochetting bullets followed us until we reached cover behind a solid looking barricade. Delmer

looked warm but unshaken. "Better than Marienbad for the figure—so much cheaper, can we find a look-out with a little less disturbance?"

We lay flat on the roof of the block of flats I had slept in during my first sniping expedition, peering over the edge the University City spread out before us. On the right a little behind us, towered the immense red brick Hospital Clinico like a modern Bastille. It was from this building that we had been machine-gunned a few minutes earlier.

Flame burst from the huge domed building before us as a shell crashed into one of its twin cupolas. Another followed, the orchestra of war crashed out; mortars, machine-guns and cannon. A tank lurched up toward the doomed Casa Velasquez; shell after shell crashed into it. We heard the distant rumble as a cupola crashed in. Tiny figures rushed from the burning building. Two more tanks were on the scene, the late defenders fell in heaps, some tried to rush back into the inferno. We hardly spoke, it was a strange sensation to watch the miniature panorama of death enacted in front of the city.

Telephone bells rang unanswered in the flats below us. "Hang on and see what happens, if anything new turns up ring me at the Telefonica, there seem to be plenty of lines." Delmer disappeared through the roof door below. For half an hour I watched the stately Casa Velasquez disappear into smoke and

flame. Nothing fresh was happening, the tanks turned back, in doing so they passed over the bodies of the newly killed in the road.

From an abandoned flat I made my report to Delmer, "Nothing fresh, be back in half an hour." I hung up the receiver. The flat I had occupied was more opulent if less tasteful than the one in which I had spent my first night. I was looking at the mahogany solidity of the reception-hall when a black retriever bounded in and began to sniff me suspiciously, he was followed by a young man wearing the Anarchist colours, and in his hand was a large automatic.

"What are you doing here?" He kept the gun pointed in my direction.

"I am a journalist, from here I watch the front," I showed him my Press pass and International Column papers. The automatic disappeared.

"Hombre, you are a comrade, go where you will, I am appointed by the tenants committee to watch their property. Alas—there are many thieves. Have a drink?" He produced a bottle of cognac. The "guardian" left me to look around by myself.

In the living-room was a grand piano covered with silver framed portraits and a large chinese vase filled with dead flowers. On the table stood a dish of slowly decaying fruit and a bottle of wine. Beside it were two half-empty glasses, showing how hasty had

been the flight of its living tenants. The whole place had a strange air of melancholy and brooding gloom. It got on my nerves; I picked up the glasses and dashed them in the fireplace. It eased my feelings a little. I looked closer at the portraits on the piano. A tall good-looking Spaniard stood with his arm round the shoulders of a lovely woman, another showed a small child dressed as a torero with a miniature sword in his hand.

Every minute I spent there depressed me more and more. Before I left, I looked into the bedrooms. Clothes had been thrown hastily from drawers and cupboards on to the bed. Then I looked into the bathroom. As I opened the door, a draught met me and I saw that a jagged slice had been ripped from the wall, through it blew a cold wind. On the black and white checkered floor the body of a man was lying half in an open suitcase. He had left his packing just a little too late.

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With the pride of an artist giving his masterpiece a final touch, Caruso the barman sent a Miami Special cascading from mixer to shaker and into four cocktail glasses. The heavy brown folds of the curtains which lined the walls were a protection against the horrors and annoyances of a beleaguered city. The warm comfort of companionship placed a moat between one and unpleasant reality, the flashing cocktail

shaker filled it. Here the tension of the day would relax. Even a tram ride was an adventure, occasionally a shell would explode in one of the narrow thoroughfares. Somehow one felt safer walking; the closed and crowded trams gave one a trapped sensation.

Despite the ban on singing in cafés, the troops would improvise on the old traditional songs, giving them a new topical note. Franco and Hitler figured largely and libellously. At ten all bars closed. The cocktail shaker would disappear. In place of the Pernod and cognac glasses, the waiters would carry mugs of hot cocoa to the refugees, who slept in the large lounge now closed to the public.

Once in the sudden darkness of the Gran Via, all sounds ceased. From the University City would come a desultory crackle of rifle fire, strangely remote. In the dark empty streets, one had a sensation of being watched. Unexpectedly a dark cloaked figure would step from the shadows, one would blink in the sudden light of a torch. "*Documentación!*"

He would examine one's night-pass and papers, salute and return to the blackness of the doorway. Always a stage of the journey to the Embassy was the St. Anton prison. From its grimed stone walls, one sensed a vibration from the misery within. Sometimes, a motor-coach would be drawn up outside the entrance; Fascists would drive from here on

their last journey. The war went on—bloody, bitter, merciless.

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Anxious parents and editors, eager for human interest stories on the International Column, rang or cabled for news of the English personnel. In Edinburgh's city Church a commemoration service was held for David Mackenzie, son of a rear-admiral, killed in Spain. While relations mourned the misguided, but gallant lad, he was leading an attack on the wireless station in the Casa de Campo.

I was sent to the front to see how my late comrades were faring. After over a week at the Telefonica, I had heard nothing of them.

No one seemed to know in which part of the line the English were stationed. I made my way towards the Institute of Philosophy. The barricade of books still stood there, the floors were bloody and the wall pocked with machine-gun bullets and an occasional shell-hole. Graves had been freshly dug in the grounds. "Freckman—unknown"; "Martelli—Genoa"; "Paul Müller—Berlin"; "Wiseman—U.S.A."; "Gelder—Rotterdam"; these names were painted on rough strips of wood, the German names predominating. I was relieved to find no English among them.

A Fleming directed me to the Instituto del Rubio. The Thaelmann Battalion had recently re-taken it from the Moors and Nazis. An occasional whine

told me how close I was to the front line, but not a living soul was within sight, save two donkeys mildly eating some fruit-bushes. The Faculty of Medicine at first appeared deserted, then I noticed a Red Cross orderly sitting on the steps making notes. "Je suis un journaliste Anglais, j'ai perdu mes camarades."

"That's O.K. I speak God's own language. No English around here—plenty of Moors. Come to take a look, but don't touch nothing."

We walked through the half-dark corridors into the cellars. A little sun found its way into the dark basement we were in. My eyes gradually became accustomed to the light. "Christ!" What I saw sent a chill down my spine.

My guide shone his torch. "Washington Irving's got nothing on that." There could not have been more than fifty Moors, but in that eerie light, there seemed five hundred at least. All were dead; some sat in chairs, others sprawled across tables or lay in twisted heaps on the floor. "Those boys won't do no more looting. They killed the bloody rabbits, hens and sheep and ate 'em. What they didn't know was that they had been injected full of germs by the professors. They didn't have time to kill the animals before they beat it, the Moors found 'em and ate 'em germs and all. There's enough bacilli in here to lay out Madrid." I fled up into the sunlight. I felt I should never be clean, what foul disease was on my

clothes or in my lungs? I sweated with worry as I remembered a text-book with disgustingly vivid plates showing the ravages of obscure diseases. A hot bath and carbolic soap seemed my only hope of salvation.

"Don't you worry too much, buddy, you'll be O.K. Those niggers *ate* the stuff. Here, have a drink." I refused the flask. "I'd like some disinfectant if you've got any." The strong carbolic smarted on my hands, but I felt much better.

I found the English on the outskirts of University City; they had driven back the Fascists for over a mile. Here trenches were deep with well-built dug-outs and sandbagged parapets.

"Keet, ye bastard! How are ye now, desertin' on us loike that!" Bill wrung my hand warmly. "We're all aloive, every man of us, though every one of us is dead be roights."

The boys gave me a warm welcome. Whatever resentment they may have felt at my going, they hid it very effectively. I was able to give them the news I had picked up in the press-room.

"An' I say he ought ter do right by Mrs. Simpson—b . . . r Mr. Bloody Baldwin." I imagined the same arguments going over garden fences in Mitcham and over refined tea-tables and in the costive comfort of Golder's Green. "I dina see what the deeference it makes tae the poor bloody worrkers what he marries."



ENEMY PLANE?



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"Ere, Jock, this bleedin' war's bin and spoilt yer sense of romance." Joe had left his eternal frying of bread to join in the argument. He never finished. Zwing, crash! the ground shook; we dived for the dug-outs. It went on for ten minutes. Somehow it was not as terrifying as a raid in Madrid. The barbed wire, steel helmets, the very trenches we lay in robbed it of much of its horror. It was when the shells or bombs would crash into crowded streets where life a moment before had been so reassuring in its normality, that the shattering of the stream of daily life exaggerated its ghastly effect.

The bombardment ceased. Jeans, now group leader, came along the line. "Everybody O.K.?" Messer lay on the bottom of the trench moaning, doubled up with pain. Two of the boys held him while an orderly tore away his trousers. "That's a f . . . g awful thing tae happen tae a mon," cried Jock, looking on. The orderly looked closely for a moment, then burst out laughing. As neatly as a practised rabbi, a shell splinter had circumcized Messer.

The ambulance rocked and bumped up the shell-pitted road of the University City. Messer was much cheered by the knowledge that his more vital parts were intact. Soon, the ambulance ceased to jolt and ran smoothly through the Quatro Caminos streets, we were both relieved. I had long lost the illusion that the red cross meant anything in modern war. A

hospital was an easy target. "What was the use of wounding the Marxist swine if one allowed them to recover?"—that was not Fascist logic.

Messer was left in the Obrero Hospital. Here I gathered a useful piece of news, no badly wounded cases were being treated. The authorities were preparing to evacuate the Northern suburb, which meant a fresh attack from a new quarter was expected. The Government spy system was excellent. No major move by the Fascists was made without their knowledge. This caused something of a panic in the Rebel high command. Changes were frequently made, but still plans would leak out.

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"To-day, Arthur Horace Chubb, Press photographer, is a man without a country. He has outraged diplomatic etiquette by dropping his bread into his soup from too great a height—stop—he has been expelled from the British Embassy—stop—that's all, good-bye!"

Yendricks, B.U.P.'s star correspondent, removed the ear-phones and mouthpiece. "Hello, what's this front-page story about our Mr. Chubb?"

"You heard—Chubb has been fired out of the Boys' Home for cheeking the prefect. Came in last night and crying in a loud voice, said: 'Christ sake! dried cod again.' A natural if rather too pointedly expressed sentiment. One of the Gib's fetched Scott, said that

Chubb was mad drunk and ready for rape. Scott treated Chubb like a fag caught smoking, meaning well but just *not* the right line to take with a grown Fleet-street camera man."

"Chubb was as sober as you or I. Anyway, he did not like being pi-jawed before a lot of giggling girls. Scott ordered him out of the dining-room; Chubb took no notice. Scott walked out. This morning Chubb was given two hours to pack and clear. Have a look at the notice-board when you get back. It's all in black and white—a solemn warning to dagoes, drunks and pressmen."

This seemed a little hard. I wanted more details. "What's he going to do now?"

"I offered to put him up at my place." (Yendricks had a flat of his own off the Castellar.) "But the charitable Embassy officials have got on to the Foreign Office in London to complain to his firm. It's enough to get him fired and they know it."

"But that's going a little too far. What does Forbes say about it all?"

"It's done under his instructions. Well, anyway, have a chat with Delmer and the others; I'm off now."

Later, in the Gran Via at dinner, I found the Press in conference. Everyone was indignant. L'affaire Chubb looked like becoming an affaire Dreyfus. Some were for "showing it up" in their papers, others for boycotting the Embassy. Chubb said nothing.

Sefton Delmer sat listening without a word, sipping his coffee. When the talk died down, he made his contribution: "It's quite plain Chubb must apologize."

"And lick the Embassy boots? You British sure are democratic." Greenspan, dark, curly-haired, baby-faced representative of a Chicago daily was derisive. Delmer was quite unmoved. "You want us to make a little Tom Mooney out of Mr. Chubb. That may be good for the cause, but we must not lose sight of the victim. All the indignation in the world won't get him his job back if he is fired. Better a little tact and save unpleasantness. I took the liberty of seeing Scott this morning. Forbes will see us to-night. Chubb, may I offer your apology?—Thank you. It will be so much more sensible than a display of dramatics. Now, what will you all have to drink?"

Somehow it was always like that. Delmer managed to get the last word. In addition to a most persuasive tongue he possessed a dangerously disarming manner.

When the flaming Reichstag set reaction in Germany ablaze, there was one English journalist inside the closely-drawn police cordon. General Goering saw him and snarled to his black uniformed guards: "What is *he* doing here?" Goering felt possessive about that fire; foreign journalists were most unwelcome. But Hitler, in an ecstasy of emotion, saluted Delmer. Not a man in the Schwarzcopp dared remove him.

In Madrid his reputation of intimacy with high Nazi

circles was not a recommendation. By sheer force of personality, he overcame the initial prejudices against himself, not only amongst the Spanish officials, but even among German *émigrés* in the army. He was a journalist above all else, expelled from Burgos for daring to send accounts of Fascist mass executions, he was grateful to the Madrid censorship for their sane attitude on "news". He would not have scrupled to smuggle out anti-Government propaganda if it was news. No one could ever be certain where his political sympathies lay, least of all himself.

The interview with the head was most congenial. Large glasses of liqueur whisky helped towards an amicable settlement. Delmer carried things off with his customary tact. Chubb's apologies were made and accepted and a cable to his firm, stating the matter was settled, would be sent in the morning. Mr. Ogilvie Forbes had an excellent taste in whiskies; our glasses were refilled. Mr. Forbes's voice came through a warm haze: "We must be firm in these times, you know. Got to set an example to these dagoes, what! Drink's all very well, but a man must know how to carry it."

My mind went back to a large hall filled with boys on a hot summer afternoon. A blue-bottle buzzed against the high window behind me. The drone of the head's voice went on, "and those of you who are going into the world"—buzz, buzz—"set an example—decency, purity—your tie a symbol"—buzz, buzz; was

it a fly or a wasp? I longed to turn and look—"and always play the game." The wasp had hit my leg and I awoke with a start. We all shook hands and said good night. Back in the press-room Delmer groaned, "God! we call on the All-Highest as a sober body of exemplary journalists and you go to sleep in the Ambassador's reception-room—and snore like a Gibraltese."

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Red Fleet takes the Air

THE tall, lank woman gave the plump woman in front of her a push; at any rate the plump woman said she did, and much more besides. The long, lank one slept with policemen, her children were Moors. The long one retaliated—the fat sow would sell her body for a handful of potatoes and it would be overcharging. The plump one seized her opponent by the hair and pulled her into the road. Two hundred women and children forgot their long wait in the food-queue and watched the two women fighting like cats; shouting advice and encouragement.

Delmer and I stood on the corner, watching. "Not a pretty sight, hunger. I saw it in Berlin in 1918, but it is worse here." Two soldiers separated the women and sent them to the back of the long file. Delmer went on, "Franco has an ally worth more than Hitler, Mussolini and the Moors put together—famine. No one will starve for a cause. They may die, but slowly starving is too much." Things were becoming critical. Fresh meat was fast disappearing from the best hotels. The butcher-shops had closed days ago. Even the genius

of the chef at the Gran Via was beaten by bean, fish and eggs. Occasionally rice or macaroni would appear. Madrid was tightening its belt.

At the Telefonica I ran into Delaprée, I was very glad to see him again. "And how is la petite amazone Rosita?" I told him we had parted in Barcelona over a month ago. In the high-pressure atmosphere of war, all sense of time vanished. "We must all lunch together at Marichu's, you, Delmer and myself."

Marichu's was Madrid's last gastronomic stronghold, famed for food in normal times. The charming Patrona still managed to produce a delicious meal. One was glad to pay thirty shillings a head to taste almost forgotten meat or fresh fish.

Our luncheon-party was a great success. Delmer was in an excellent mood. With him, was Ilse W—— the Press-censor. Ilse was a Viennese. With the Dollfuss dictatorship and the bloody suppression of workers in Vienna she had joined the illegal Communist party. An able journalist herself, speaking six languages, she had been appointed Press-censor in Madrid.

Delaprée brought with him Maracine, of the secret police, rumoured to be its director. Conversation covered a multitude of topics. Food figured prominently. Delaprée and Delmer worked out a plan to get a supply of food by airmail from Toulouse.

Ilse turned to Delmer. "We are to entertain some

countrymen of yours. Perhaps they have heard the stories of famine, and bring their roast-beef with them?"

"Who are these?" I was interested.

"A deputation of British M.P.s from all parties, to see at first hand our conditions in Madrid." This meant news. The worthy reader of the morning paper was bored with bombing; it was remote. Smith would turn to Jones, on the eight-forty from Surbiton. "It's an old Spanish custom—always having trouble these dagoes." Unless heavily larded with "human interest", they would turn to news of the divorce courts, secure under the hard, protective crust of their bowlers.

1914 was a long time ago. Prosperity was theirs. Mr. Drage and the Building Society reared a barricade against reality. Edward was a "bit of a lad", but it just wouldn't do, Baldwin was right. For theirs is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory—or as much of it as five pounds a week will buy.

Even the pressmen themselves had grown indifferent to almost daily air-raids over the thickly-populated working-class district. When the tape-lined windows of the café began to tremble, one ordered another whisky. One journalist made a daily pilgrimage to one of the crowded mortuaries to restore his sense of proportion. The ever-changing tenants of the marble slabs were not "news" save to their parents, children

and friends. It restored his sense of perspective towards war.

Another correspondent approved of the bombing. He had seen heavy artillery, Russian, hidden in the narrow streets. He never explained what it was doing there or how the ingenious gunners fired over the tops of the shaky tenement buildings. He was representing a sane and solid daily, the Bible of many a bourgeois breakfast-table.

After our luncheon-party, I was detailed by Delmer to scour the shops down by the Toledo bridge for food. To-morrow being Sunday no story would be phoned through. This quarter was under fire, and had not been combed by the hungry Europeans as had the shops in the Gran Via, Alcalá and the Fuencarral. Many were closed and deserted, but a number remained open. At a large store near the bridge, I bought a supply of Bovril, caviar, tinned fruits, vegetables and (a great discovery) a six-pound Christmas pudding.

The manager had not left his shop although his stock of tins and jars danced up and down on the shelves as a Government battery near by replied to the rebels.

A shoemaker went on hammering at a pile of half-finished boots and shoes. "Many of his customers would never need them," he told me. He had worked in his little shop for nearly forty years; his twelve-year-

old granddaughter brought his few daily necessities, rice, beans, dried fish and wine. He gave me a respectful *buenos dias* as I left.

As I walked up the street by the Toledo bridge, I picked up my courage by thinking of the twelve-year-old child. I instinctively threw myself into the gutter as a screaming shell blew a splintered gash in a stone barricade only a hundred yards ahead of me. Once past the barricade, I felt safer. Inside a deserted café I examined my shopping for breakages—all was intact. The café was not quite deserted, from an inside room a large patron emerged. "*Salud!* the *compañero* would like a drink? A filthy business, war." He poured two large cognacs and refused payment. "Next time."

"It's not too comfortable here," I commented.

"So-so. It's not as safe as it might be. Only this week the granddaughter of old Jimenez, the cobbler, was hit by a shell as she brought the old man his food."

"Why does he still let her sister bring him his food?" I was puzzled.

"Hombre! he does not. The little one had no sister and she is dead. *Claro*, I give what little I can; he is a little——" he tapped his head suggestively.

We had another drink and I left the patron polishing his glasses for the customers who never came.

The bombardment seemed to be increasing. A shell hit a tiled roof, sending a shower of red dust over me.

I was tempted to leave my provisions and run. I turned into a narrow street which curved up towards the Puerta del Sol. The church of our Lady Song with its fantastic rococo saints had been badly hit. Here in the old days famous singers had sung their devotions. As I drew near, I heard a sound of lost souls like a damned choir at a black mass. Screams, bellows, groans; smoke poured from the torn roof. A militiaman was there before me, hammering at the carved doors with his rifle butt. He was joined by a *guardia civil*. The door crashed open, and they were swept aside. Down the church steps poured a stream of terrified pigs, white with powdered stonework or blackened with smoke, they tore past me towards the Toledo bridge. They disappeared round the corner, pursued by the militiaman and the *guardia*.

At the Telefonica I found Delmer. "You've been a tidy time. Getting drunk, I suppose, well! well!"

"No, I'm going to do that now."

The first person I saw in the Miami was a blonde dressed in a green tight dress under a loosely worn dark fur-coat. She was not only beautiful but disturbingly familiar. I was troubled, then relieved as I remembered our meeting in the Gran Via's gutter, that night when the city flamed with German bombs. She looked puzzled as I stood before her table. "May I return a little debt of ten pesetas?"

"Hombre! now I remember. You wear a different hat from our first meeting."

"I am no longer in the Column, but working as a journalist."

"Why did you leave—were you wounded?"

"No, I was afraid. I just couldn't stand life in the trenches." I wished I had been wounded.

"*Bueno*, you're honest, that is something at least. Your comrades are here on leave. I have already spoken with a young one from your company—'Rommeelley'. I asked for news of you."

"Is he here?"

This was news indeed. It was a fortnight since I had heard word of the English.

"He and a comrade take a bath at the Gran Via. Sit down; they will soon be back."

Esmond turned up with four of the English. All were in good health and looked better for their first real bath in a month. After seven weeks' fighting, Messer was still the only casualty. All our English company were fit and well. Our German losses had been heavy. Jeans was now a captain, and Birch had taken his place as group leader.

Joe was pessimistic. "It ain't nacherall. Somebody ought ter get killed. The bloody earth's gonna open up and swaller the 'ole bloody lot of us, see if it don't."

"Shut up, Joe. Swallow another pint before the earth swallows you." I bought another round. Nothing

more was said, but each of the company asked himself in his heart would he be first.

An officer came over to our table and saluted. "Camarada Elvira?" he handed a note to my blonde companion. "Si, hombre, I will come." She gathered up her coat. "*Buenas noches*. I will leave you with your comrades." Her smile was slightly mocking. "Give my congratulations to your brave comrades." She was gone.

"Eee, by Christ, there's a bonny lass. I'd sooner sleep wi' her than general bloody Franco." Jock was visibly moved. "Who is she?" "Where did you find her?" "I don't know the first thing about her. I met her in a gutter in an air-raid. I haven't set eyes on her since, until to-night." Joe suddenly pointed. "There's that bloke that came to see us at the front." Delmer waved and came over to our table. "How are you, boys—not in Burgos yet?"

Whatever the boys may have thought of Delmer politically, he was popular with all of them. Letters, cigarettes and the occasional loan of a few pesetas, which was more than a loan, he was a one-man Y.M.C.A. Romilly told me how once at the base, before going on leave, one of the zealots said, "I suppose you're going to meet Delmer." "What of it?" "If you don't know, you ought to—he's a bloody Nazi." Joe took up the challenge. "If you're a good Communist, I'd sooner be a bloody Nazi like him."

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We finished up our evening at Chicote's bar. Here, Asturian miners now attached to the International Column, spent their leave; less ordered than the Miami, it was more amusing. Here I heard for the first time the wild Asturianas, strangely like the Scottish reel. Jock had no difficulty in joining in the dancing, which, as the wine flowed, grew wilder.

A leather-jacketed, top-booted figure, strode across to our table; across his uniform he wore pilot's wings, on his peaked cap, a captain's silver star. "Ha! English, I see—you know me, I expect—Captain Grotto, first pilot, Death Squadron—have a drink?"

Our visitor ordered a round. "I don't want you to think I am out here on a money-making racket—I'm not. Party man first and last. Can't say the same for other pilots but they are good boys. You chaps been up at the front?" He didn't wait for an answer but went on with his discourse, "We'll all get it soon or late—a short life," he downed his whisky in one, "but a merry one, eh?"

I looked at Delmer, did he wink? I couldn't be certain; the others looked puzzled. "What is your bag this week?" Delmer spoke with deadly seriousness.

"To tell the truth, I haven't been up, the old wound, you know." He patted his leg. "Caballero rang me this morning," he looked round suspiciously and lowered his voice, "got a very confidential mission. 'Grotto,' he said, 'I want you to be ready. I learn that

Hitler is sending the Graf Zep. to Seville—understood? It's a chance, will you take it?' Not a word to anyone, of course I took it, the plane's ready, tomorrow."

"We must drink to Captain Grotto's success," Delmer raised his glass. The whole thing was so serious that I wondered whether I was the crazy one. A dreamy look came into the captain's eyes. "To think only six months ago at the old 'Varsity and today shooting down Nazis—makes you wonder."

"Are you an Oxford man?" asked Delmer.

"Yes. How did you guess?"

"I knew the accent, I was there myself."

The conversation waned. Joe stood up: "Well, I suppose we'd better be 'avin a bit of old shut-eye. I 'ope that 'ot water bottle ain't leakin' ternight. The captain 'adn't better be late if 'e's goin' ter drop that bomb on Franco's 'ouse before the old eggs and bacon."

The Asturians had stopped dancing; the bar was closing, we all prepared to go. A girl pushed past the doorkeeper and looked round as if in search of someone. Captain Grotto hailed her, "Yvonne." She smiled and came over to us.

"Where 'ave you been, I look for you everywhere, such a disaster—but 'oo are your friends?" He introduced Delmer as an old college chum. Then gravely saluted the English troops in the best O.T.C. style. "These boys are doing their bit for Spain."

"*Charmant*, but we must go, *au revoir*." The captain and his consort disappeared. After seeing the English to the metro for their barracks, we walked through the still, black streets to the Embassy.

"What do you make of our aviator friend?" I asked Delmer. "Now I know why no one stops the German and Italian bombers making holes in the city." But that night as we walked home we could not see the mechanics working through the night in dark hangars near Albacete.

We were waiting in the press-room of the Telefonica for news of the coming M.P.s, when the air-raid alarm was given. The building towering, white and slender in the morning sun, above the once elegant shops of the Gran Via, gave us, in spite of its prominence, a sense of security. From its top-floors, one could see Madrid stretched out like a carpet; with glasses white-turbaned Moors, and grey-clad troops could be seen moving like ants in the Casa de Campo. Beyond the burnt-out Montana barracks, that still after two months sent up a column of smoke. Near it, still burning, was the Duke of Alba's palace, a national treasure-house; German incendiary bombs were blazing a path for the new culture-Fascism.

On the other side of the town, a few kilometres beyond the Toledo bridge could be seen a white house. Its walls were gashed with shells, it was still under heavy fire. Through field-glasses, I watched its gaps

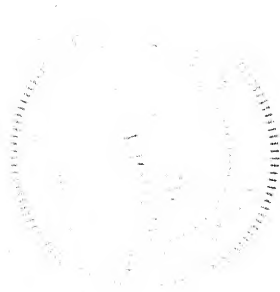
widen as the explosives bore into the walls. I was fascinated by the amount of shells it takes to demolish a well-built village. Little white puffs of smoke kept appearing in the sky; it was an anti-aircraft barrage. I watched the Fascist air fleet draw nearer, the Italian Capronis silver in the sun, the German Junkers dark like obscene birds of prey flying with frightening slowness as though heavy with death and secure in their power of destruction. Fighting Heynckels and Marchettis zoomed round them, white puffs of smoke burst impatiently short and high.

In the street below, the people were scattering into shops or subways. I could now distinguish the black wing-tips and tails which identified the Fascist planes. Crash! crash! boom! the exploding bombs tore away the roofs of the crowded houses like paper. The Telefonica was shaking from its foundations to its tower.

The roar of engines became deafening, and then grew less. The air fleet passed on on its civilizing mission. I watched them circle over the University City, their trail marked by smoking ruins. They were coming back to look over their handiwork, they grew louder again. German pilots boasted that they would have an orgasm as they watched their bombs burst into the once beautiful buildings below them.



MADRID'S BOND STREET AFTER AN AIR-RAID



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Flying high from the opposite side of the city, from the aristocratic Salamanca quarter, came a second fleet of planes. Heavily-built monoplanes, they tore through the sky at an amazing pace. I counted seven squadrons; were these more Fascist reinforcements? The heavy Junkers and Capronis flew serenely on. The protecting Fascist fighters hovered uncertainly, then with a zooming roar the strange monoplanes tore into the Fascist squadrons. Before they realized what was happening three of the Junkers were sprawling to the ground in flames, a fourth followed. The avenging planes soared up from their destructive dive, climbing at an incredibly acute angle. The Heynckels and Marchettis were hopelessly outdistanced.

The people had come out from their hiding-places, great cheers broke out as the monoplanes dived again, with the Fascist pursuit planes well behind them. A Caproni and a Junker collided in mid-air; the formation was annihilated. The people were wild with excitement; below me I heard a roar: "Viva Russia!" And for once they were right. The Germans and Italians were flying for their own lines, again and again the Russians cut through them. The Fascist supremacy in the air was broken, fourteen German planes were brought down on December 19th, when the new Red air fleet made its *début* in Madrid. I remembered another air-raid and how a small boy had seized a piece of rubble from the remains of his house and

flung it impotently at the destroyers. Below that pile of bricks and splintered beams lay his mother and sisters. Those cold figures of women and children on their slabs were avenged.

Jerry Wants a Broad

"THE Embassy here is the biggest political racket since wise guy Ulysses worked off the wooden horse on those Troy boys as protection." The baby-faced American poured out another drink. "What do these Germans want with an Embassy when they don't recognize this Government no more. Lil' bird tells me there's going to be trouble in diplomatic circles—and soon."

Three hours after our café conversation we got the tip that the German Embassy was to be cleaned up that day. In ten minutes, Delmer, Cox, Greenspan, the American oracle, and myself were stationed outside the large building which lay back off the Castellar, surrounded by trees. Two men in plain clothes advised us it was unhealthy in that quarter. They carefully went through our papers and our pockets for arms. They were just concluding a search of Delmer when three cars in quick succession roared out of the Embassy gates and up the Castellar.

Whistles blew, a grey Hispano Suiza boarded with police tore after them. Two tenders of *guardias civiles*

appeared from nowhere, a machine-gun was cleared for action and set up outside the Embassy gates, an armoured-car from the near-by War Ministry drove through the gates. The inhabitants of the house were cowed by this display of force, they surrendered without a shot. They were loaded on to trucks and lorries and transferred to the San Anton prison for interrogation.

The Embassy itself resembled a fortress, windows were sandbagged, light machine-guns and German stick bombs were placed ready, an arsenal of Winchesters, revolvers and automatics were gathered together. I pocketed a neat little Webley automatic. We had become so used to dum-dum bullets at the front that one took them for granted, but I was fascinated to examine the soft-nosed explosive bullets in their neat boxes. Signal lights and anti-aircraft rifles were included in the German diplomatic equipment.

"Now then, don't you put any of them machine-guns into your pockets before I've photographed the b . . . s." Behind me was Chubb, hat still well on the back of his head. Without speaking a word of Spanish he persuaded the police to arrange the arms in realistic groups; a plump and important police-officer was made to crouch on the floor, pointing a set machine-gun over the sandbags. Chubb had a way with him.

It was not until the following day that we received a full account of the raid from the propaganda depot.

Important Fascist leaders hiding in the Embassy, had escaped in the three cars we saw speed away. The only Germans in the Embassy were two prisoners; a man named Müller and an old gardener, both non-Nazis, seeking shelter in the Embassy of their Fatherland when revolt broke out, and they were kept in custody as being politically unsound. Müller had no political views and the old man hadn't even heard of Hitler, or if he had he couldn't remember.

The leading papers published attacks on the abuse of diplomatic privilege, apart from the German Embassy no names were given, but it was an open secret that the worst offenders were the Finnish, the Cuban and strangely enough the French Embassies. For the two first-named a regular tariff for a passport had been introduced.

There is a peculiarly clumsy strain in the German mind, despite the efficiency of their underground organization in Madrid, the Nazis made some big blunders. A classic must be the list left in their Embassy giving instructions to terrorists in the Fifth Column who used the Embassy as a base, and, gem of subtlety, gave the names of the Embassies for the murderers to take refuge in.

Two days after the Embassy raid I was drinking hot chocolate in the Miami; at four o'clock it was almost empty. I was so engrossed in a book that I did not notice Captain Grotto who sat himself opposite to me.

"I've had bad news, old boy, they've taken her, the swinel"

This seemed to need clearing up: "Who's taken what?"

"Yvonne—lying there cold, her lips were warm when I left her." The air ace held his head between his hands and moaned. "I'm finished with devils, I gave my all but my life—shot down—and they take my Yvonne, I know the swine, I'll get him."

This was all very difficult. "Why not go to the police about it?" That seemed to me the most sensible course.

"Don't you understand, it was they who have taken her—she was shot as a spy."

"Are you sure she's dead?"

"Yes, I rang up as soon as I heard about her arrest. I spoke to Del Vayo. 'Grotto,' he said, 'if you'd let us know she meant a thing to you, I'd have saved her.' *Claro*, they'd get me if they knew I was telling you this."

This seemed to call for alcohol, I left after two large whiskies to give my story to Delmer. The Maestro was not over-impressed. We were discussing the coming of the M.P.s, when the door was flung open and Captain Grotto staggered in. Delmer looked annoyed. "Did you get drunk before or after the story?"

"He's not tight, unless he put in some quick work after I left him."

The captain swayed and then collapsed dramatically on the floor of the press-room. This was drama, even Delmer was impressed. "Is it poison, do you suppose?" he loosened his collar. The captain's moans increased. Ilse from the censor's office, joined the ring of pressmen around the apparently dying captain. In his tremors, his heels drummed up and down in the most alarming fashion, his eyes rolled and his arms had to be held. Ilse felt in his holster for his gun and pulled out a spectacle case. I told her the story as Grotto had told it to me. Two guards carried him away, still moaning, into the dark silence of a spare office.

"Please do not mention anything of this," said Ilse. "Our friend is a little sensational in his statements, tomorrow we shall go into the whole affair more thoroughly."

After that night the fantastic Captain Grotto disappeared from Madrid. Yvonne, we learnt, far from occupying the morgue, was quartered in the rather more congenial quarters of the Swiss Embassy.

One morning on arriving at the Telefonica, drawn up outside the Gran Via Hotel, I noticed three impressive saloon cars, an armed escort of Guardias de Asalto stood by their motor-cycles in the kerb. I wandered over to see what had occasioned all this ceremony. Closer to, I saw the Union Jacks flown on the three cars—at last the English M.P.s.

Seated in the lounge were the six M.P.s come to Madrid to see the war at first hand. Geoffrey Cox, an early riser from the Embassy floor, was already there. He introduced me. Leader of the deputation was Mr. Seymour Cocks, a Labour member. Despite a game leg, he carried himself well; grey-haired, with a sympathetic smile, he had the understanding look that people possess who have known suffering.

Plus-foured, with one foot in a bedroom slipper, "this darned gout", was Captain Crawford Green, Worcester's Conservative M.P. An ex-officer in the cavalry, he was the delegation's senior military expert. To any left-winger his fierce guardee moustache would at once be politically suspect. The liberal spirit was provided by Mr. Wilfred Roberts, tall and thin, his black soft hat and black sober suiting and overcoat gave him a nonconformist appearance.

Mr. Dai Grenfell struck a cosmopolitan note with a black beret; a miners' M.P., he displayed the same tenacity in getting to know the truth behind Government propaganda, as in the mines at home. The linguist of the party; he spoke four languages fluently.

Rumour had it that the dapper little Tory, Mr. Archie James, was Eden's unofficial envoy. It was refreshing to see the old Etonian tie amidst Madrid's sordid ruins. An ex-flying officer, Mr. James knew something about air-raids himself.

Youngest of the party was Captain Macnamara, an

advanced Conservative. Immaculately dressed in a well-cut lounge suit, he looked very British.

The delegation had brought their own Press reporter, a Mrs. Hodgeson, who smiled very sweetly and made copious notes.

Two *guardias civiles* accompanied Margarita Nelken and Señor del Vayo when they welcomed the delegates. Señorita Nelken beamed over her lorgnette "I am the interpreteur, we shall speak French, pleez, I spik no ingleesh."

The whole morning was spent in a tour of the bombed houses, schools and streets, Margarita Nelken clung to her little flock like a shadow. She would point with her lorgnette at a pile of ruins: "C'est terrible, the poor leetle ones and their mothers—terrible!" She put a great deal of expression into her protests, perhaps a shade too much for her English audience. She would draw up her shoulders, close her eyes and open her hands in a gesture of horror. Not even the divine Sarah could have kept it up. By the second day the M.P.s were a little mutinous. "Same old story, conducted tours, just like Russia, eh!" Captain Crawford Green twirled his impressive moustache.

The fact was the Spanish Government was terrified lest a stray bomb or shell might cut off one of Britain's lawgivers before they returned with their report. The Spanish Government had a pathetic belief that the

National Government were interested in the moral issue of the war. The opinion of nine out of ten of the pressmen in Madrid was that Mr. Baldwin and his colleagues were in wholehearted agreement with Franco's methods of dealing with the "reds". What was dimming their enthusiasm was the influx of German and Italian troops. It was obvious that Franco could never hold Spain with his Moors and a handful of legionaries; foreign garrisons would be necessary to "pacify" the country. A pro-German Spain was a serious blow to our ally France; Mediterranean control would be in Italian and German hands. At home the struggle went on, not in the trenches, but in the cabinet room and the city offices. Finance like its puppet, Mr. Baldwin, was lukewarm about Franco lest he should turn into a Frankenstein—they had Hitler, "the bulwark against bolshevism" as a warning, he had proved a short-sighted investment.

In their frantic efforts to let Britain know the truth, the Spanish Government were a little over-eager. The M.P.s wanted to see for themselves, and in doing so gave the jaded Press good copy. They had their opportunity when their lorgnetted familiar was detained at the War Office. Someone wanted to see the royal palace. The leader of their escort was delighted. Four of the M.P.s were bundled into a car, *en route* for the ex-King Alfonso's palace. This was right in

the firing line, the prudent Nelken would never have permitted such an excursion. We were received by the officer in command, Colonel Negrete Castillo, a twenty-five-year-old ex-student from the Imperial College in London; his English was perfect.

We were shown over the palace rooms, many of them gutted by incendiary shells. In the wide courtyard, which had seen the pomp and splendour of the last hundred years, were piles of hastily salvaged treasures. Royal portraits damaged with heat and smoke, tapestries, in places soaked and stained, lovely marbles blackened and cracked by heat.

The royal nursery was almost intact; a rocking-horse was still there, gently swaying with every shell that hit the walls. Perfectly modelled toy cannons and their gunners mounted guard over the empty room. A cupboard was piled high with albums of gramophone records, each one stamped with Alfonso's name and coat of arms. I glanced at the top of the pile: *The Mikado*, a sound bourgeois taste.

Another small room, untouched by fire, contained the ex-King's wardrobe. I was much taken by his uniform as honorary Colonel-in-Chief of the Sixteenth Hussars, an English regiment. This to my embarrassment our guide handed to me as a souvenir. The colonel in charge insisted that everyone should take away a small memento of his visit. Captain Crawford Green spotted an antique silver salver—so did

Captain Macnamara. Wilfred Roberts modestly followed Basanio and chose an old inkstand in the dull-est lead as his portion. Captain Macnamara deferred, as is proper, to his senior officer. "No, look here, sir, couldn't dream of taking it—it's yours."

Captain Green was not to be outdone in politeness: "No, my boy, you saw it first, it's a nice old piece, but you take it." This went on for some time, they eventually allowed fortune to decide, and handed Colonel Negrete a penny. "Call in the air." Crash! a shell landed close at hand. "Heads." "Tails."

The colonel examined the coin: "Heads, it is."

"Yours, my boy." Captain Macnamara picked up the salver. Captain Crawford Green was given a Chinese vase in a soft green soap-stone as consolation.

From the sandbagged window, overlooking the terrace, we watched the fighting in the Royal Park. Below, and outside our line of vision, was a battery of field guns, Captain Crawford Green leant out of the window, an officer pulled him back. "Dangerous to do so, shell splinters." Bang! Crash! a shell whined a way into the distance. "Ha, Ha, they're their own damn guns and they don't know it. We soon learned to know our own cannon in '16." Crash!-Crash! a cloud of brickdust and flying rubble blotted out the windows. Mr. Wilfred Roberts shook the dust from his coat. "I'm not a military man myself, but the

Government don't keep their guns very clean, do they?"

.
Delmer accompanied the M.P.s on a visit to the front, leaving me to find news in the city. Britain is a nation of animal lovers. I thought, a little news about our dumb friends might be welcome. I paid a visit to the Zoo. Housed in the Retiro Park, the animals shared it with large concentrations of artillery. A friendly keeper accompanied me. The animals looked cold and bored, after the first week of the air-raids, they accepted them without comment. An ostrich was causing some worry, an air-raid always brought on palpitations and she had to be dosed with bromide.

The lions and tigers were even more listless than in normal times, they had gone vegetarian. The snakes, he told me, needed careful watching as they would augment their war rations by swallowing each other. Since a child I had always loved that patient monster, the elephant; I asked to see him. "I am sorry señor, even the animal world has its martyrs for the Republic." I remembered unfamiliar meat I had tasted at the Gran Via—I asked no more.

Near the lion cages stood two keepers armed with shot-guns. "Do you expect an escape?" "No, hombre," the keeper was indignant, "this week some of those barbarian gunners stole the Wart Hog of Brazil and ate

the rare animal. We shall watch, who knows—to such vandals the giraffe itself is not sacred.”

Like most non-combatants my friend had a bloody mind. “This Government is weak, we should feed the Moors to the poor lions—a good lesson for the black ones.”

We walked round to the keepers’ quarters. “Would your honour like a little food?” There was a delicious smell of cooking. “*Muchas gracias*, I should be delighted!”

The meat was tender, it tasted good if a little strange. I made my farewells to my host and guide without daring to query its origin.

I walked back to the Telefonica. As I was passing the Ministry of War, I stopped to allow two official cars to drive in. Seated in the back of the second was del Vayo, yet it was not the Foreign Minister that held my interest but his companion—it was Elvira. Deep in conversation, she did not appear to notice me.

The food supply was becoming even scarcer. The Gran Via, last hotel to remain open for food, closed its restaurant doors to the public. The Press were still admitted, together with officers and Government officials, through the staff entrance. The same bean or lentil soup, fried sardines or omelettes appeared nightly, compared with the mass of the population we lived like gods; yet third-rate ambrosia every day does not help the temper. Nerves were strung up with



casual shells that dropped in crowded streets without warning, and almost daily air-raids. As the drone comes nearer the heart beats faster, until the climax when it passes over your head and grows fainter in the distance. As the siege wore on, we all began to show signs of the strain; it was the monotony of the destruction and death around us that was so demoralizing. The narrow streets bred a claustrophobia, one felt safer in the open spaces of the front.

The crowded tube stations provided a vivid picture of war from the civil population's angle. The platforms were crowded, it might have been the rush hour at Leicester Square when London workers in packed discomfort pile into the trains homeward bound. Madrid's crowds that filled the metro platform, stood, sat or lay on begrimed mattresses as the trains passed through the stations; their homes were smoking ruins. I spoke to an old lady who shared a mattress with three children. "Here," she said, "it is warm. My little ones are safe from the Fascist bombs. We shall go back to our home when the war is over. It is not easy for us here, but the workers are kind. At first I was frightened," she lowered her voice, "my son was an officer in the army. But here we have no class hate—we all must live together. The people are patient, 'what are a few days or weeks in a cave?' they say, 'we shall all be free and our children free from tyranny to-morrow'. If my son were here,

he, too, would learn to understand the people as I have."

"Can I help you?" I felt sorry for the patient old lady.

"Thank you, señor, but no—perhaps some milk for the little ones. We are a large family," she pointed down the crowded platform at the long row of destitute humanity. It was not difficult to imagine such a scene in London. Next to my old lady was an unshaven man, a clerk, he looked, from his suit and once white collar; his pale, weary-looking wife, was distended with a coming child. Behind them, on the tube wall, was a gaudy advertisement showing a sunny room, at a table a smiling mother was feeding an aggressively healthy child. "Horxo builds beautiful babies," ran the legend underneath it.

I was glad to leave the fetid atmosphere for the cold air in the street above.

The M.P.s had just concluded a visit to General Kleber at his headquarters near the Prado. From Delmer, who had accompanied them, I heard an account of their expedition. The general's welcome had not been over-cordial, perhaps he lacked the Spanish charm of his colleagues. "Well, gentlemen, and what are you doing here?" Some of the M.P.s were a little abashed, not so Captains Crawford Green and Macnamara. Soon they were talking over old campaigns.

"Now look here, we just had this situation in '17, what you should do is plain, just make a flanking movement with cavalry, nothing like horses for a job like this, and cut the neck off the bottle—you isolate 'em, simple!" Captain Crawford Green drew the manoeuvre on the general's blotter.

"Thank you, gentlemen, I must try it out some time. For the present, good-bye." General Kleber shook hands all round, the interview was ended. For the benefit of the M.P.s the Government cavalry gave a display, it was most exciting. Even the ex-captain of Hussars was impressed. Drowning the click of a movie-camera, the horsemen thundered down on the little party, wheeling away just before they reached them.

It was Captain Macnamara who noticed the little mounds of stone along the roadside. An ex-combatant of India's North-West frontier, he was interested.

"Those don't make very good cover for your men, colonel?"

"But yes, they're excellent I assure you."

"But come! the stones would chip with the bullets, the splinters might kill them."

"Hombre! these are not for bullets, we've icy winds from the Guadarramas they must shelter from, the front is five kilometres away."

We were sitting over our dinner in the Gran Via,

when Delmer told me the story. "But what I find far more exciting is having met Elvira, she is Spain's Jean d'Arc here in Madrid. She reorganized the War Ministry's connections with Valencia when things were almost lost. You know I believe women are going to win this war. Passionaria, Margarita Nelken, the mysterious Elvira represent one aspect, but the thousands of nameless wives who keep their husbands up to scratch, it's women who will decide things."

"Tell me about Elvira?" I was interested.

"She is little more than a name to most of us, she works harder than any two ministers put together, and anonymously too. I was introduced to her in the censor's office to-night. Ilse knows her well."

I could now understand the contempt in her voice when she learned that I had left the Column.

"By the way one of your ex-comrades is in town, an Edinburgh Varsity man, Messer; he's here on sick leave." Delmer finished his brandy. "To-morrow the M.P.s visit the prisons, I'm going along, you'd better see what's doing at the University City."

Messer I found in the hotel bar with a tiny vivacious brunette. "Celebrating your escape from 'worse than death'?" He laughed, "Hardly, I met Juanita in Chicotes and we're come up here for a quiet drink."

"Any news of the boys?"

"No, but I am going back next Monday, I'm god-

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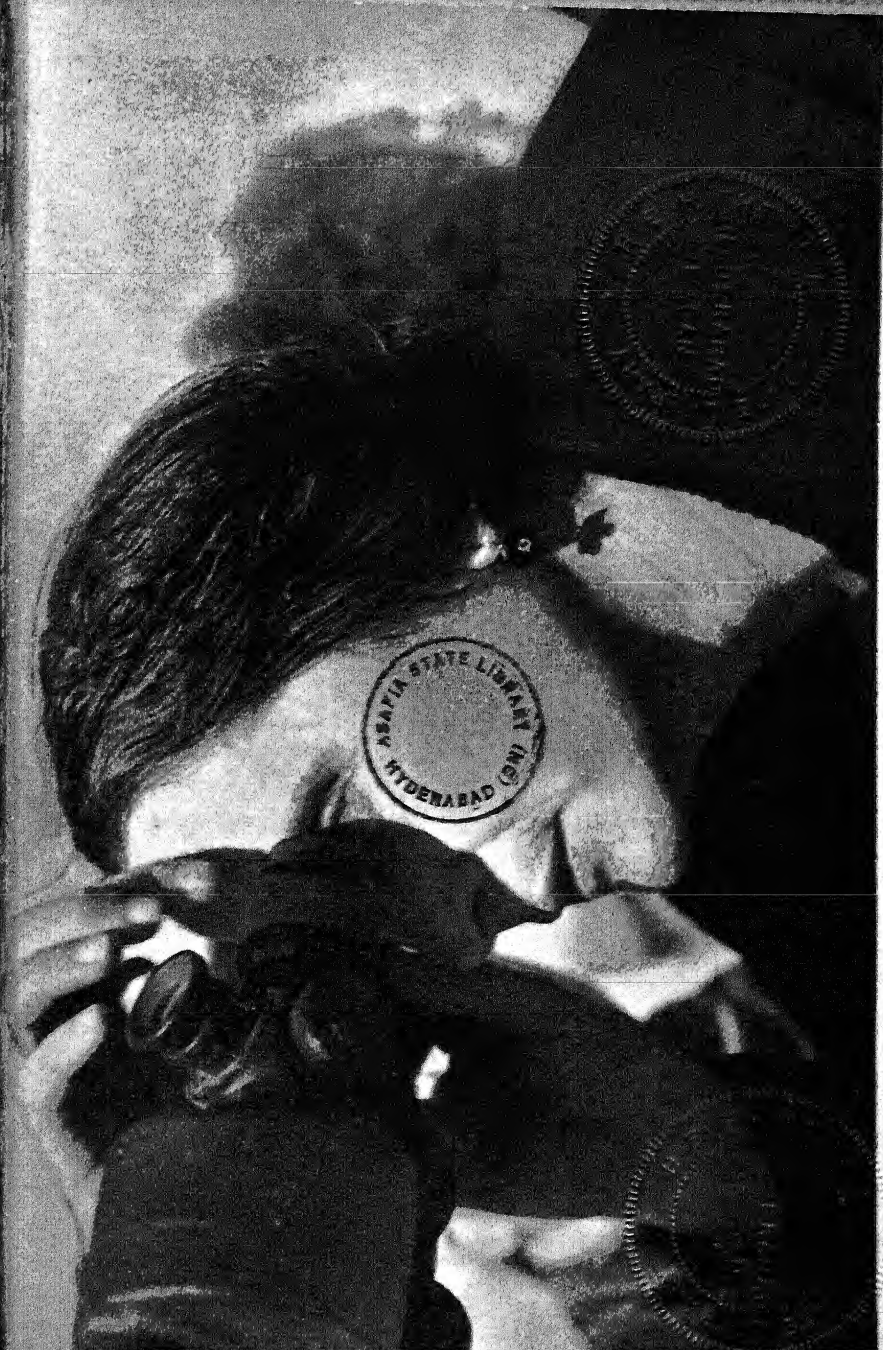
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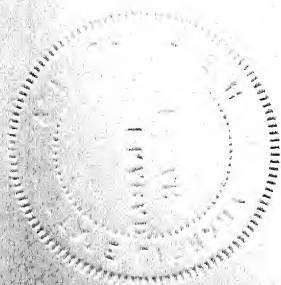
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PASSIONARIA WAS A NAME LOVED AND HATED THROUGHOUT SPAIN



damn sick of the hospital. It's kept wonderfully clean, floors and linen. They've got no bed-pans, doesn't make life easier. Nurses try hard enough, high school girls many of them, but you've got to be born to nursing. The nuns took good care, no one cashed in on their racket."

I felt a sudden slap on my back almost upsetting my drink, "Hello, you goddamn son of a bitch—where can I get a dame for the night?"

It was Jerry Fontana, our lone American. "Are the other boys in town?" I asked him.

"Hell no! I just had to come up and get a comfortable bed and bounce a broad before I get bumped. The boys are going goofy waiting to see who'll get the foist packet. It ain't right, three of them German Zugs," (a *Zug* was nine men) "wiped out right alongside, and not one bastard in our bunch hit. Jock was talking about it, and long Sid gets Joe's frying-pan and tried to top him, that guy's getting nervy. Birch shuts 'em up: 'ain't you bloody fools havin' enough scrappin'?' They quiets down all right, but Jeez! everybody's that touchy, we're gonna get leave next week, Christ dey need it! Ain't taking no chances, I want my greens now, I gonna look around, so long!"

"He's a queer fellow, how did he come to get caught up in this war? He's not a Communist, don't believe he knows what it is."

Messer grinned: "He's all right, plenty of guts. War has got Jerry out of trouble."

"It seems to have got most of us into it."

"When the Abyssinian racket broke, the police asked about Jerry in Connecticut—someone's safe had been opened up with dynamite, whoever did the job lost a finger. You've seen Jerry's left hand! Anyway the Italians were leaving in a boat-load for Naples to enlist. Jerry joined them. He'd got no quarrel with the Abyssinians, so he got off near Suez and got back to Marseilles.

"Somehow the police had a bias against Jerry, he was arrested twice on suspicion. He took a chance and stowed away on a boat leaving the next day. The first port was Valencia, and the cargo, volunteers for the International Column."

"Couldn't he have stayed aboard?"

"That wouldn't have suited him—the boat was going back to Marseilles and the police. He joined the Column and here he is in Madrid, says he came out to fight in a revolution and found a bloody European war. He's a godsend in the trenches, if we'd more like him, we'd clean up those Germans and Moors in a month. The biggest handicap to fight a war successfully is an intellectual outlook; and Jerry's worst enemy wouldn't accuse him of having that."

"Well, I hope it isn't you that breaks the luck of the English company."

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"Good night old man, I think my wound is a passport for immortality. Fate can't doublecross me after that. Come on, Juanita, time to go home."

Juanita giggled: "*Los Ingleses muy buenos por la noche!*"

"What does she say?" asked Messer.

"That you won't have cold feet in the night."

"Franco is not Playing the Game"

"I'M bored with looking at damned bomb-holes, I've seen them in France as big as Leicester Square. These are flea bites, sir, flea bites!" Captain Crawford Green banged the table, his gout was better, his liver, however, had taken a turn for the worse. The table began to shake and the long windows rattled, distant crashes grew louder, the hawkers outside the hotel left their stock of woollen hats and badges and ran through the swing-doors for safety. The crowds were scattering. The whole delegation rushed to the front of the hotel, we were in time to see line after line of German Junkers and Capronis pass over our heads. We waited for the grinding roar of bombs to tear open the wide Gran Via.

"By God, they look good, this going to mean another tour of the bomb-holes?"

How pleasant, I thought, back to your little constituency to describe the bombing of Madrid over a glass of port at the club. Each of those bombs means torn flesh and misery, homes turned into piles of smoking ruins.

E E N

"Come see the bomb-holes now, you may not find them quite so boring." I was white with temper. We piled into one of the Hispano Suizas. It was not hard to find the billet of one of the bombs; the end of a working-class street was cordoned off by militia. On producing our papers we were passed through. The fire brigade and an ambulance were already on the scene.

As we approached the ruined tenement Seymour Cocks caught one of his sticks in a bundle of twisted wires. As he shook it free he noticed inside it were a few yellow feathers. Even the poorest families in Spain will keep canaries as pets. The bomb had carved a jagged wedge between two houses, a loosened wall hung perilously, we were warned of its danger. The firemen had no knowledge of the death roll, already two shapes lay wrapped in bloody sheets, ladders were being reared against the loosened walls. The firemen swarming up them to the upper windows.

Two firemen half carried a fantastic figure from the ruins, it was a man grey with dust from head to foot, except for his face, that was a bloody mask. "*Madre mia*," he croaked. The first-aid man gave him cognac. Revived, he rushed back and began tearing with his bare hands at the heap of rubble. "My mother, she's here, you know! we must get her out. We have tortillas for dinner." Two militiamen dragged him back into the ambulance.

Two women broke through the cordon as the ambulance left; they stopped and stood stupefied. "But they cannot have bombed my house, my children are in there, my children are in there—my children——" her voice rose to a scream. With her nails, she tore open the face of a militiaman who tried to hold her and rushed into the house, she caught her foot against the wreckage of a chair, and as she fell her head struck the stone work, she lay there quivering and moaning; her few groceries strewn over the ground.

The other woman said little. "I and my neighbour had gone to the food queue, it is a long wait, our five children we left with my daughter, she is a good girl, only twelve but so grown-up." She looked round in a dazed fashion. "Why should this happen to me? I am a good Catholic."

From two floors up a fireman signalled to the first-aid men to take the two women away. The woman who had fallen was already in an ambulance. Neighbours led the other into an undamaged house; she made no protest, she was numbed with shock and misery.

"The children are here." Another ladder was placed against the wall. "I'm going up," Captain Crawford Green was very quiet.

"It is very dangerous, they all may fall at any moment," our escort warned him, but he was half-way

up and disappeared inside the building. Captain Macnamara followed, then Wilfred Roberts, I was close behind. The thick dust almost blotted out the room. One wall had been completely blown away. A fireman was filling a sack from a bloody pile, in the corner. Another was trying to move a child from between an oven and the wall where the explosion had wedged it. As the fireman tugged the child's head rolled from side to side, its neck was broken.

In the street below the pile of bodies had grown to nine. Captain Macnamara was almost in tears; we all were white and shaken. From the upper story the firemen had rigged life-lines, women were being lowered to safety. Crazy with shock and terror they were taken into the waiting ambulances. They made pathetic attempts at modesty, trying to cover their naked legs, even as they hung suspended in the air, their clothes pulled high by the rope. We stood watching in silence. "By God!" said Crawford Green. "I don't mind clean killing, but this fellow Franco is not playing the game." As we left the crowds had formed into a long double file; in silence they marched passed the bodies, men, women and children with clenched fists raised.

"Franco and Germany will be hated by those people for generations, they may capture Spain, but they'll never hold it," said Captain Macnamara, as we left for our cars.

We had seen the misery and death caused by one bomb, that morning nineteen fell on Madrid.

When the M.P.s left Madrid they were missed by the whole Press. Apart from the possibility that they might make front-page news by getting themselves blown to pieces, they had provided a two weeks' diversion from the monotonous horror of the siege. It will be difficult to imagine a more miscellaneous group, and yet each, individually, was well-liked.

The other diversions Madrid offered were few. Theatres had closed, but the cinemas, unless destroyed, remained open. Films were mainly political; Russian epics, such as *Mother*, *Chapaev*, *Cronstadt* and *Thunder over Mexico* were shown to crowded and enthusiastic houses. The Madrilleños have one great screen hero, Pop-eye the Sailor. Every cinema showed this nautical erotic triumphing over enormous odds, supported by spinach.

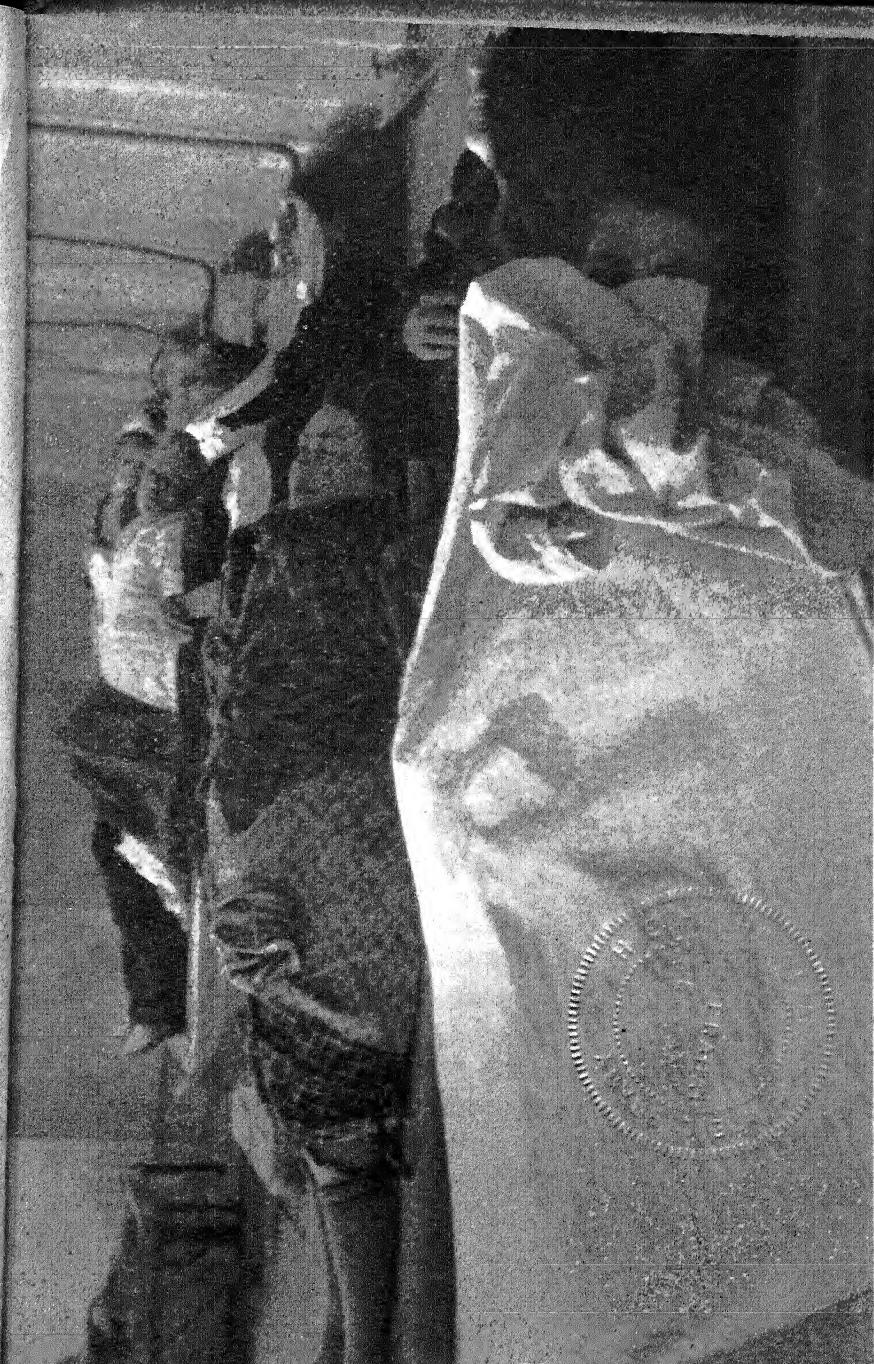
One film I saw must have been exported direct from Russia; it was unpleasantly topical. It showed the coming war between Russia and Germany, without the slightest pretence at disguising the combatants. A happy family of workers get along like good citizens. Papa is an ace air pilot, he flies the mails, mother is on the woman's local Soviet, and junior is leader of the Young Pioneers (a nasty child!). The Local Amateur Theatricals are interrupted by a warning call, "Ger-

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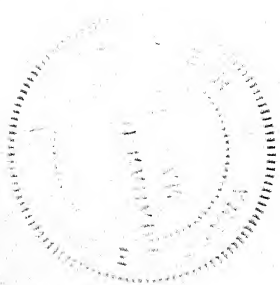
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THAT MORNING NINETEEN FELL ON MADRID



many has declared war, an air fleet has crossed our borders."

Everyone rushes to his or her post. Junior complete with small steel-helmet and gas-mask trudged across country to join the Young Communist Militia.

Swastika-decked planes rain death on the city. The Red Fleet drive them off. A Nazi pilot drops a gas-bomb near junior, he is not quick enough with his mask, he is carried home to his parents, father flies for vengeance and brings down the plane that bombed junior, in a great battle. The Nazis are beaten, the swastika flag is hauled down and amidst rejoicing of workers, the hammer and sickle run up in its place.

It was propaganda laid on with a heavy hand. The sound of the bombing was too realistic to be pleasant; but the audience loved it.

Despite the dearth of organized amusements, no one was bored. The delightfully inconsequential way in which shells dropped into the city assured this. Even the so-called neutral zone was not free of these sudden surprises—the Telefonica towering above the city was getting more and more attention from the rebel artillery. The stray shells from one battery had a habit of landing in the neutral zone. A building a few yards from the British Embassy was twice hit, the shells exploding harmlessly.

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"Yes, my young friend, in the midst of life there is

death." The tall, lank, bearded figure next to me turned away from watching a bloody militiaman carried inside the Gran Via, his head gashed with shrapnel. "St. John has told it, the Beast with seven heads is reared over Spain. You must know the Pope is anti-Christ and Franco is his servant, it is here in the book."

My new acquaintance was striking; in appearance, he resembled Bernard Shaw, but his eyes had little humour, they were black and intense; his costume reminded me of a cleric in an Ibsen play. A rusty black cape was matched by a clumsily furled umbrella.

"The Lutheran Church of Sweden has sent me here, with letters from my good friend Senator Branting, a lover of true liberty. Perhaps you gentlemen of the Press can give me some information?"

"I'll be delighted to help you—can I introduce you to my colleagues."

"That will be so good of you—my name is Arnefelt, Pastor Arnefelt. It is an honour for a pastor of so small a town to be entrusted with this mission."

"What type of information do you desire?"

"I, like most of my brethren, am pacifist. The ways of war do not interest me, but perhaps we might see a little of the gallant men, of what you say, the International Column."

"It would not be easy. The Column is fighting in the University City and near Boadilla, have you a pass for the fronts?"

The pastor rummaged in the folds of his cape and produced a bundle of letters and papers. "Ah! Here it is, from the Junta de Defensa."

We set off for the sector around Araganda, with us came Roberto Alonso, Paramount's ace camera-man. On the way, Alonso whispered to me, "Who is this bird?" I told him. "Looks like Dr. Strabismus to me," he replied.

Pastor Arnefelt took a lively interest in what was going on. He was deeply moved by the families of refugees hurrying from the terror, handcarts piled high with their pathetic belongings. One old woman stopped for breath by a barricade, she looked at her pile of furniture then at the barricade. "*Oiga!*" she called a militiaman. "Help me down with this bed."

"Hi, mother, you can't sleep here."

"I shall sleep—I am old—but not here. Take it. It was my marriage bed, my sons were born in it. I did not give birth to slaves—on to your barrier with it."

She shook a gnarled work-worn fist at the Casa de Campo. "*No Pasarán! No Pasarán!*"

My pastor was impressed. "No one can conquer a people with such a spirit, it is rare."

Next we passed through the suburbs of Rosales, a target of German and Italian aircraft. What had been a prosperous quarter comparable to Golders Green was a mass of ruins. Whole blocks of flats were blazing.

It was a city of the dead—a virtual no-man's-land. The roar of flames, the rush of water from a burst main made a low and terrible sound.

"Yea, I say unto you——"

Standing in the midst of the desolation, his head thrown back, his white beard waving in the wind, our friend looked like a figure from William Blake. Alonso stopped his filming to watch the old man. It was Job returned to find his home destroyed, his children slain.

"See they destroy their own false gods." He pointed to the remains of the "Buen Succesor" Church bombed into ruins. Twisted tram cables, snapped telephone wires were tangled across the road. A filling-station had been blown almost into nothing, and yet in front of a gaping bomb-hole that had been a petrol pump stood a new Singer car, without even a window broken or a scratch on its red paint-work.

"What we need is gasolene." Alonso looked carefully at the tank. "Gasolene, what is that?" asked the pastor.

"Petrol, the car will run perfectly with a little juice."

"But what of its owner?"

Alonso waved his hand expressively over the desolation round us. "It's salvage now."

From a near-by tank-depot we obtained crude petrol. After a few false starts, the car ran perfectly. The pastor, his scruples overcome, rode with us in the back.

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We drove out beyond Fuencarral, through the Pardo once a royal hunting park, and up behind the University City. Facing the Guadarramas a long stream of men were engaged in digging trenches that ran right across the hillside, over 6,000 men were digging for their lives. We passed two batteries of 12 inch guns; for a pacifist, our pastor was very interested in all these preparations.

Alonso and I left the car and walked across the hillside to the great trench, the workers redoubled their efforts when they saw the camera turning. The batteries behind us crashed out a salvo, puffs of smoke could be seen in the distant Casa de Campo. A cavalry officer galloped up to us and examined our papers. On no account were we to film the gun batteries.

Back in the car again we found the pastor deep in his Bible. "I hope the gunfire did not disturb you."

"It is the voice of vengeance, on that day the trumpet will be louder." Alonso winked at me, we had both made up our minds he was quite crazy, lunatics were no novelty in Madrid in those days.

At the Telefonica an urgent message was waiting for me to call at the office of the Seguridad—the secret police. My God! someone must have owned that car. I left a note for Delmer explaining what had happened in case I disappeared. At the police headquarters I was shown into an empty office and

left there. I had been there about ten minutes when the door opened behind me, I turned around—it was Elvira. "What you here, too!" She looked more beautiful each time I saw her.

"You are in a very serious position, so serious that I must warn you to speak the whole truth when you are questioned. You know what happens to a spy in war-time?" This was more than I had expected.

"I don't understand you, I, a spy, it is the last thing, my comrades are fighting here in the trenches."

Elvira came very near to me and stared into my eyes. "I don't believe you are a spy, I don't think you are a coward, even, but you are in a dangerous position. I want to——"

The door opened again. A plump jolly little man with a small moustache came into the room. "Good evening." He spoke English with a strong French accent. "We shall keep you only for a few minutes, I hope. There are a few questions I would like to ask you. First your passport if you please." He examined it carefully. "You were with the International Column?"

"Yes."

"After you—er—resigned, you stayed in Madrid?"

"Yes, as a journalist—here is my permit."

"*Bon!* With your comrades in the Column you have some good military information for your paper?"

"My paper does not specialize in military information; they want the wider aspect of the struggle."

"Ah, yes! The human interest, that is what your great public wants."

His manner, up to now pleasant and smiling, changed.

"Perhaps you will tell me what 'human interest' the position of our new batteries of Russian guns hold for your readers."

"None at all—nor for myself either."

"Then why do you take your friend Pastor Arnefelt on a tour of our secret fortifications?" My interrogator rapped out the last question.

"He wanted to see some of the fighting men. He has no military interest, perhaps a little mad, but no harm in him, I'm sure. I met him for the first time to-day."

"Do you recognize this?" He pulled a black leather-bound book from his pocket, it was a Bible. "Take a good look at it." It was an ordinary Bible printed in Germany the book-mark was in the Apocalypse of St. John.

"The pastor had such a Bible—I don't know whether this is his or not."

"Let me translate the inscription—your German is not very good perhaps. 'To our beloved pastor from his flock—Grunegarten, 1928.' Do you notice anything odd?"

"No, I don't."

"His loving flock made this presentation a year before their gift was printed!" He showed me the publisher's date, 1929.

"Something more, for a pastor with no military interest he can draw a most efficient plan." From inside the leather cover, he drew out a sheet of paper, on it were lines and figures. "These, my friend, are our new positions and artillery emplacements."

I was too amazed to say a word, but sat and gazed at the sheet of paper. "We will not arrest you, but I want your solemn word that you will say nothing of this. Whilst we conclude our investigations, I must ask for your passport. Go about your work in a normal way, but do not attempt to leave Madrid until you hear from the Seguridad. If you are questioned about the religious one, you must say you have seen nothing of him."

"I promise I will say nothing of it."

"*Bon!* You must deny your readers this human interest at any rate. You may go now. *Au revoir!*"

Elvira walked to the door with me. The phone rang and a police agent answered, as I passed through the door I heard the words "urgency", "Finnish legation".

Outside the hall darkened against air-raids. I said good-bye to Elvira. "I am glad you have not been shot."

"That is very kind of you."

"Nothing—it would have been too bad if you had left the front only to be shot behind the lines." But she smiled as she spoke.

C H A P T E R F O U R T E E N

Not a Finn in Madrid

S EFTON DELMER was in a bad temper.

"Hello, where have you been, leading a riotous life on your salary instead of prowling the Moorish lines for news. The English are in the big attack next Monday; didn't know that; did you?"

"No, it's news to me—has your food from Paris arrived?"

"Yes, it has—in the French Embassy the minister has promptly requisitioned it to feed his tame boarders."

"What does Delaprée say about that?"

"What can he? He told the minister he'd make sure he didn't get his Legion d'Honneur, anyway."

Stubbs Walker fiddled with the electric samovar that had been imported into the press-room, its normal function of making tea was but one of the many uses it was put to. Rum Toddy, Stubbs Walker's nightcap of Horlicks, onion soup, coffee; like the table in Auerbach's Cellar, all and every beverage flowed from its tap, each tasting vaguely of its predecessors.

"Cox, you're going back this week, I hear," said Delmer.

"That's so and I shan't be sorry either to get a short spell." Geoffrey Cox was beginning to show traces of his two months' ordeal. His vivid front-line dispatches had cost a great deal in nervous strain.

"Delaprée is going back, they tell me; Chubb left last week; soon there'll be none of the old school left."

"I wish," said Delmer with feeling, "that those Gibraltese would go back to Gibraltar; all they do is eat and drink their heads off on the Government—as a tax-payer, I resent it."

With the passing of the weeks, the vendetta had not lessened, a key to the cabinet in the press-room had given the Sawney Bean family a setback. It was only temporary. After a week the whisky began disappearing again from the locked cabinet. Matters came to a head when in the darkness of the dormitory an unknown hand flung a boot at a snoring Gibraltese. A small incident, but it soon became the *cause célèbre* of the Embassy. With frequent re-telling, it assumed the proportions of an atrocity story. "Those drunken journalists at night—they had come in and trampled poor Pedro almost to death as he slept. Ah! His body—such awful bruises—a miracle he was not crippled for life!"

The Head Prefect had conducted an inquiry but no light could be thrown on the mystery, despite hints

about "cads" and "doing the decent thing". The guilty party preferred to remain anonymous. Delmer believed the whole thing to be a propaganda story invented by the Gibraltese themselves.

"If my toothache doesn't get any better I'll be going back as well." Dental complications had given Stubbs Walker sleepless nights. "Why is Delaprée going—is he on leave?"

"No, he has a complaint against his paper *Paris-soir*. Here in Madrid, he is repeatedly being denounced as working for a Fascist paper. 'I am not a Fascist or a Communist—I am a journalist,' is his answer. Imagine his annoyance when he discovers that his paper has not printed a word of his dispatches since November the first and he doesn't see the fun in risking his life every day to fill an editor's waste-paper-basket."

Cox yawned. "He won't be sorry to see the menu of a Paris café before him again, I'm sure, he's got a wife and kids there too."

"It's Christmas Day in the workhouse for those that don't go back, that's one day on which I won't eat beans." Jimmy Oldfield meant to observe Christmas.

"You won't have to, three hampers are being sent out from Paris by the *Daily Express* and the *Telegraph*. One ought to arrive anyway. As an additional precaution my wife has received a list from me——" Delmer read out a list that was indecent in its profusion.

"We could garrison the press-room for another two years if the things get through."

While we planned our Christmas dinner, the little Frenchman with the engaging smile was making other plans. Pastor Arnefelt had done a little talking, just enough to tell the Seguridad what they wanted to know.

It was a bitterly cold night as we walked up Fuen-carral towards the Embassy; past the black St. Anton Prison and up to Santa Barbara. The cold wind from the snowy Guadarramas will play tricks with sound, that night it was more playful than usual; the rifle-fire from the University City seemed unreasonably near.

"Do you think the Moors have got in?" I asked Cox.

Two days before a band of twenty of them had penetrated as far in as the Castellar, before they had been trapped in a cul-de-sac by a patrol and wiped out. Early risers had been horrified (if such an emotion were still possible) by the dead Moors sprawled like discarded puppets in their long cloaks and turbans in what had been a respectable city street.

We had no wish to meet a marauding band of Moors. It was doubtful whether our Press passes would carry much weight. Delmer was sceptical. "It's the wind you know. The frosty air carries sound in an amazing way. I remember——" He was cut short by a torch that nearly blinded us after the long darkness.

"Alto! Documentación!"

We answered as boldly as we could. "*Periodistas Ingleses*," and carefully produced our papers. It was indiscreet to whip out a wallet too quickly; the gesture might be misinterpreted. Nerves were on edge and trigger fingers jumpy. As the patrol scanned our papers we noticed that they were steel-helmeted and carried drawn automatics.

The firing that had died down broke out again. The patrol conferred for a second. "Go with care and in single file." We were puzzled; once in the Calle Fernando el Santo we saw our danger. Directly outside the Finnish Legation was a lorry with a light machine-gun mounted, manned by steel-helmeted assault guards, four of them had a baulk of timber and were battering the Legation doors. A bullet sang viciously over our heads, a reminder of our danger. The large oaken door splintered, a volley of shots came from the defenders, we had by now reached the Embassy gate, some of the bullets clanged against its heavy iron.

We hammered at the doors. "Open up—*Periodistas Ingleses!*" This had always been our "Open Sesame". The door remained closed. The guards warned of the raid had instructions to admit no one. Our position was acute, apart from the danger of stray bullets for the defenders, the Government Guards might easily take us for escaping Fascists seeking refuge in another Embassy. Delmer and Cox hammered on the unyielding door. I took refuge behind the only tree. The

firing had stopped. A woman was screaming hysterically.

The defenders had capitulated. They began filing out, two men came out feet first. Fortunately the attackers were too engaged to notice us or they might have fired first and asked after. At last the door opened and we slipped inside.

"Get into the building at once." I recognized a very officious and over-dressed young man who rapped out the order. I had seen him about the Embassy before, like a well-trained shop-walker he was the soul of servility to his betters but the unfortunate refugees he treated like dirt. We had taken a unanimous dislike to him on sight, his tone and manner were too much for Delmer. "Do you realize to whom you are speaking? Get inside yourself, you ill-mannered fellow. You keep us in the street until we were almost killed and then insult us; how dare you!" I felt almost sorry for the elegant youth, his bumptious attitude disappeared, from Delmer's manner he thought he had sabotaged his diplomatic future by mortally offending a Cabinet Minister.

Until three in the morning lorries came and went from the Finnish Embassy, over 400 arrests were made. Many of the inhabitants were prominent Fascists, all carried Finnish papers but not one of them could read a word of their own language.

The death of Louis Delaprée was a shock to all the pressmen in Madrid. The tragic background of the war did nothing to lessen it. Death was a constant companion, he wore many forms. The militiaman walking ahead in the street—a deafening report. There was no logical reason why that shell splinter should have lodged in his brain instead of yours. A woman is dragged from under a pile of débris; you might have taken her place. The Press had a strange feeling of immortality. It was like bringing out the two-thirty for God. The same divine providence that watched over drunks and lunatics seemed to have extended its protection—or perhaps it didn't have to. The news of Delaprée's death did much to weaken this pleasant superstition.

I remembered Rosita's serious face, the scattered cards on the table of the Café Catalan. It seemed an age ago. Brought down by a lone German scout, the official French plane had landed near Guadalajara. Still living with two machine-gun bullets in his body, Delaprée had been carried over the muddy mountain roads into Madrid. The next morning he was dead.

A fellow-passenger in the plane with him had been a certain Dr. Henny, carrying a report on official executions in Madrid to the International Red Cross. There was nothing secret or sinister in his documents, everyone knew what he carried. From this grew the extraordinary tale that the agents of Moscow had arranged

for the French plane to be shot down. No journalist with any reputation for accuracy believed a word of the fantastic story.

When we interviewed the pilot he told how he had seen a plane behind him apparently scouting. Its markings were black wing-tips and a black cross. Finding the French civil plane unarmed it attacked repeatedly until it brought down its helpless victim. Those who subscribed to the Red agents story never could explain why the Russian spies allowed the doctor to depart from Madrid, it would have been far simpler and less risky to have had him quietly shot in the city.

As for Delaprée himself, what useful purpose could have been served by killing a man who alive offered such excellent propaganda. Here was a journalist of international reputation attacking his paper that would not print the truth about the Spanish War. His last letter clearly shows in whose interest it would be if he did not reach Paris alive.

"You have not published half my articles. That is your right. But I would have thought your friendship would have spared me useless work. For three weeks I have been getting up at 5 a.m. in order to give you the news for your first editions. You have made me work for the waste-paper-basket. Thanks. I am taking a plane on Sunday unless I meet the fate

of Guy de Traversay (a reporter on *L'Intransigeant*, the rival of *Paris-soir*, who was killed in Mallorca), which would be a good thing, wouldn't it, for thus you should have your martyr also. In the meantime, I am sending nothing more. It is not worth the trouble. The massacre of a hundred Spanish children is less interesting than a sigh from Mrs. Simpson."

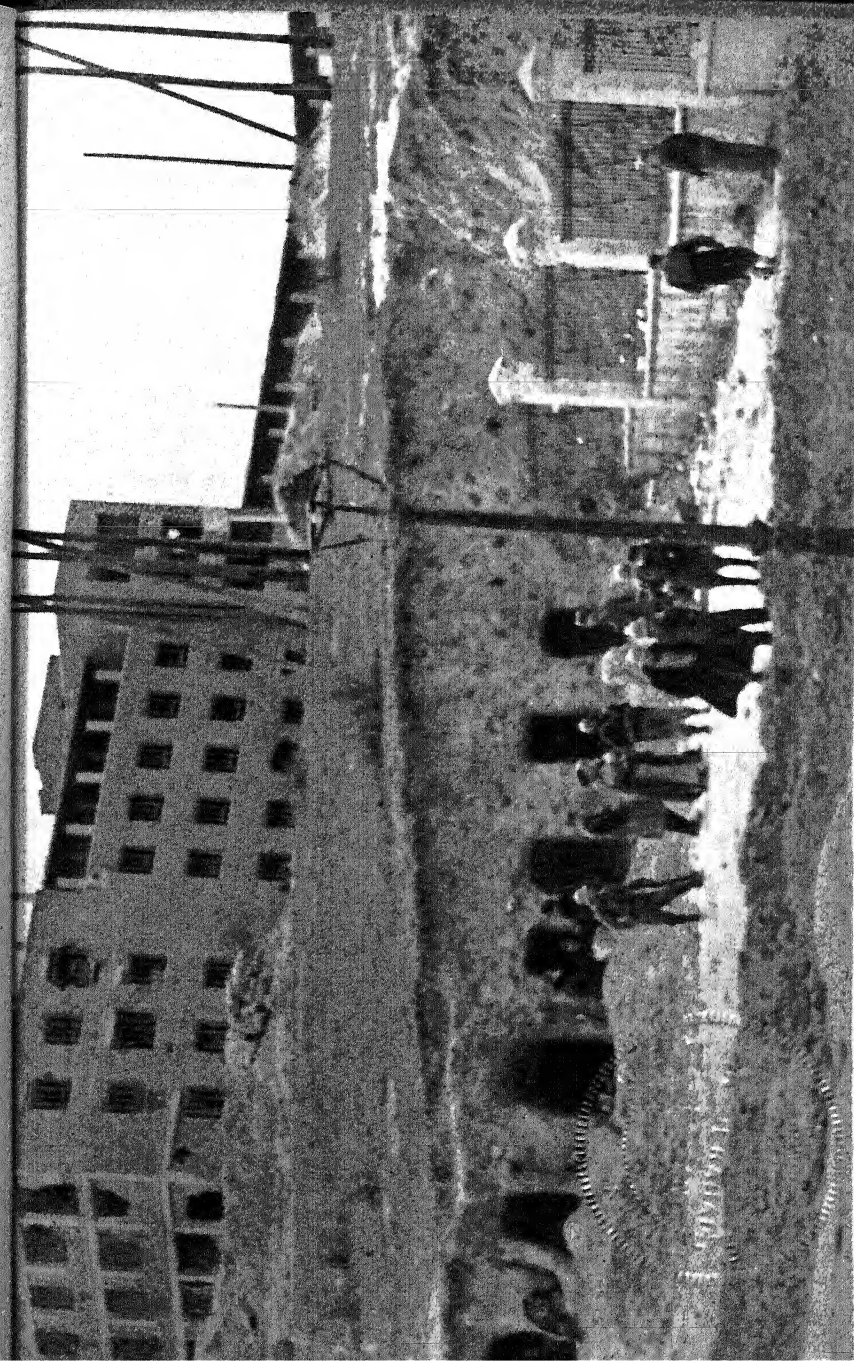
He had a premonition of death. "If I get back alive no doubt you would value a martyr on your staff." That "sinister figure Maracine", head of the Secret Police, he was a personal friend of the French journalist during his stay in Madrid. A London evening paper resuscitated the fantastic story of Red spies at a time suspiciously close to the L.C.C. elections.

From between the sandbags I could see the red mass of the Hospital Clinico towering over the University City. Here was to have been a monument of progress, the largest hospital in Spain, one of the largest in the world. Within the walls built to heal and restore the sick, men were destroying one another with a religious fervour. On one floor the Moors and Germans were holding out, below them the Government were besieging them. Through a communication trench the Fascists had rushed up reinforcements. They now held the whole centre block of the huge building. The offi-

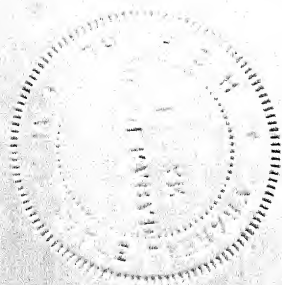
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HOSPITAL CLINICO HELD BY FASCISTS, EARTH IN THE FOREGROUND THROWN UP BY
THEIR MACHINE-GUNS. TUNNELS SHOWN JUST BEFORE MINING



cer next to me glanced at his watch, "any moment now".

There was a deafening roar, we flattened ourselves against the trembling walls of the trench, the Asturian miners had done their job well, far up into the distant mountains explosions rumbled, when the smoke cleared it could be seen that three tons of dynamite had torn the central block almost in half. Through the black smoke and brick dust I watched the Thaelmann Battalion, bayonets fixed, charging into the ruins. The exploding grenades sounded like a child's crackers compared with the roar that had preceded them.

It was my busy day. After the mining of the Clinico we had to gain information as to whether the Escorial Road was cut as the rebels claimed. This would have meant the isolation of its garrison as well as cutting off hundreds of troops in the Guadarramas. With me went Yendricks, of B.U.P., who had seen more of the front than many of the troops themselves.

The old Citröen chugged gamely up the Escorial Road; we kept a sharp lookout for enemy tanks or cavalry patrols. An officer we had questioned, told us, "He was not sure, it was not likely, there would be any Moors about, but with the Black Ones one never knows."

In other circumstances, a visit to the Escorial in the sun of a winter's afternoon would be a delight. What

with the possibility of a stray German tank or a band of Moors, my mind wandered from its scenic beauties. On the road, we did not see a soul apart from a staff car that passed us travelling at a great pace in the opposite direction.

The Escorial itself was well-garrisoned with Spanish regulars. Guards stood round the tarpaulin-covered lorries, the last treasures were being moved to safety. Experience had not taught the Government to expect that national monuments would be respected by Moors and Germans.

The tomb of the Kings of Spain had all the grandeur of death. Despite rumours, which probably emanated from Berlin, the royal dead slept on undisturbed. All the niches prepared to receive their royal tenants were filled, save one. "This," said our guide, "is for Alfonso. After him Spain will not have another king."

We stood talking with soldiers in the great wide courtyard. A now familiar drone sent us scurrying back into the tombs for cover. The dead kings in their niches were wakened out of the sleep of five hundred years. The high-explosive bombs shook El Escorial to its foundations. Trees lay splintered and uprooted in the gardens, where the Philipps and the Charleses of Spain once walked.

Delaprée's death had a sobering effect on the whole company at dinner in the Gran Via. Delmer left early

for the Embassy. When I rose to go, I noticed a woman seated alone at a table in one of the alcoves—it was Elvira.

"*Buenas noche, camarada,*" she greeted me as I passed her table. "Will you take a cognac with me before you go?"

I was glad to sit with her. Feeling a little awkward, I opened the conversation by mentioning Delaprée.

"Yes, I am deeply sorry, but do not talk of these things, there must be something other than death and blood." She looked tired and worn, paler than I had seen her.

"You work too hard. One can only do so much, what would happen to your work if you had a nervous collapse."

Elvira smiled, "I'm afraid I have no time for nerves, to-day I had to give a blood transfusion at the Palace hospital, I am a little tired."

"May I see you to your house?"

"It is kind of you. Louis, my chauffeur, has gone to bed. His day is even harder than mine."

We had reached Santa Barbara before Elvira realized she had left her bag in the Gran Via, in it were her keys. "Hombre! such a foolish thing to do. Shall we go back?" Elvira looked paler than before, it was a good mile back to the restaurant.

"Can you waken your concierge to let you in?" I asked her.

"By telephone only, but now there are no kiosks open."

"Then I will ring her from the Embassy, we can pass it on our way to your flat." Elvira took my arm. I was very frightened she would faint. The blood transfusion on top of her heavy work was too much.

"*Perodista Inglese*," the little panel in the Embassy gate slid back, and the door opened.

"I will wait here while you phone, this is the number." The icy wind whined up the empty street. "Will you be all right?" I felt worried.

"The señorita shall wait inside my lodge," interpolated the guard. "She is much too pretty to leave in the cold."

Elvira smiled gratefully.

A Gibraltese peered suspiciously at me as I went into the press-room to telephone. Some of the correspondents were playing cards, Delmer was fast asleep on his mattress. After I had telephoned to the concierge, I quickly poured out a glass of cognac which I successfully smuggled past the Gibraltese. Going through the doorway, I met the unpleasant young man; he had kept out of sight since the night of the Finnish Embassy raid. His rebuff had not been permanent. "Look he-ah, where are you going at this hour?" his accent was just a little too cultured, it had the inflexion which one associated with the Babu.

Prudence overcame a primitive desire, "Just a breath

of air, you know, better for sleep." He swept inside without another word. Elvira thanked me for the warming cognac, the guard saluted and we left; our arrangements had taken ten minutes at the most. We found the waiting concierge at the gates of her house.

"You have been very kind, I hope the things I have said to you did not hurt too much—I meant every word. You may return to your country, your rulers still find democracy works. For us in Spain our backs are to the wall. To me there are far worse things than being killed for one's ideals. Good night, my friend."

At breakfast the next morning, Delmer was summoned to the secretary's office. When he returned, he called me aside. "You've managed things beautifully, Scott informs me you're being expelled from the Embassy."

"But why? What has happened now?" I was at a loss.

"Were you so drunk last night you don't remember bringing a woman into the dormitory and drinking with her—there was I, fast asleep the whole time. You might have respected my grey hairs."

"But this is fantastic!" I told Delmer exactly what had happened.

"You'd better see Scott and explain to him what really took place."

Mr. Scott was sympathetic, but firm. "For a foreign

woman to be allowed inside the Embassy gates—if you were in the diplomatic service it would ruin your career.”

“But I’m not in the diplomatic service.”

“That makes no difference. We must keep order within our walls—it is not as serious as it first appeared. I am prepared to accept your version. But Mr. Forbes is firm, the Press have been a constant trouble to our little family—there was that affair of the boot, never cleared up.”

“D’you believe *I* assaulted the Gibraltese?” This was too much.

“No-er. But we feel sure it was one of the gentlemen of the Press.” Mr. Scott beamed, “I have I think, alternative accommodation to offer you near at hand. A flat under our protection has a room you may use, meet me at three o’clock to arrange things. Get along now and be a sensible chap.”

It felt as though the house captain had given me a wiggling.

My room was one of several which comprised a large flat in the Fernando el Santo. A woman with a swarm of progeny of all ages welcomed me. I settled in my belongings. In addition to the Embassy chauffeur and his wife, there lived in one of the other rooms a pale young man. He had not left the flat since July 1936, all day long he sat listening to rebel Burgos or Sevilla on his radio. He was one of the

forty-thousand who were waiting Franco's entry into the city.

In cellars, in deserted houses, in their homes, Monarchists, Fascists and reactionaries waited their turn. From them was drawn the fifth column. All were not violent, or actively anti-government, many kept to their houses through fear. They could easily have gone abroad in the city without let or hindrance from the Government.

C H A P T E R F I F T E E N

Massacre

THE last time I saw Joe and Messer was on December the twenty-first. They had come into Madrid to do a little Christmas shopping. Joe had sworn to cook an old English dinner. For a week, he searched for suitable fare in the grounds of el Pardo, he and Jerry between them had captured three geese and an underfed hen. Since its capture the hen had been well-fed. Joe was loath to part with it. "It knows me like a mother, follers me around like wot I was its father." He tapped me on the knee, "Yer know wot, these blokes've got no imagination, this 'en's going to provide us with the old breakfast egg—they want to kill the por animal now."

"Joe keeps it in his dug-out with the dead geese, I've got a feeling long Sid's going to swipe those birds, Joe."

"That's all right, chum, any ones lays a 'and on that 'en, it'll screem the bleeding trench down. Young Romilly's going to keep an eye on it till we get back."

The amazing luck of the English company had been holding out, so far no one had even been

wounded. Reinforcements were on their way—over a thousand English volunteers were training at Albacete and would be at the Madrid front by the new year.

"The English will cease to be a novelty when the next crowd arrives. We're going to form our own battalion, calling it after 'old Sak' (Saklatvala, the first Communist M.P.). They'll make us into a special squad with the other boys from the Edgar André Battalion."

"What price the civil war veterans?" said Joe.

"This war's not over yet, we don't know who'll be left as veterans anyway," Messer added cautiously.

"We won't feel so bloody precious when we got a thousand with us instead of a dozen." Joe picked up his few parcels, "Come on, chum, yer know I don't like been' out after dark all them scarlet wimmin about, worse'n bloody Moors they are, stritel! So long, 'appy Christmas, come up the front and 'ave some pudding presented by Mr. Sefton Delmer." I shook hands with them both and they were gone.

The English did not eat their Christmas dinner. The arrival of an Italian army division at Avila prevented them. At an hour's notice the eleventh brigade was rushed to Boadilla to check the new advance. This included the Thaelmann Battalion and with them the English company.

Boadilla in times of peace was a summer holiday

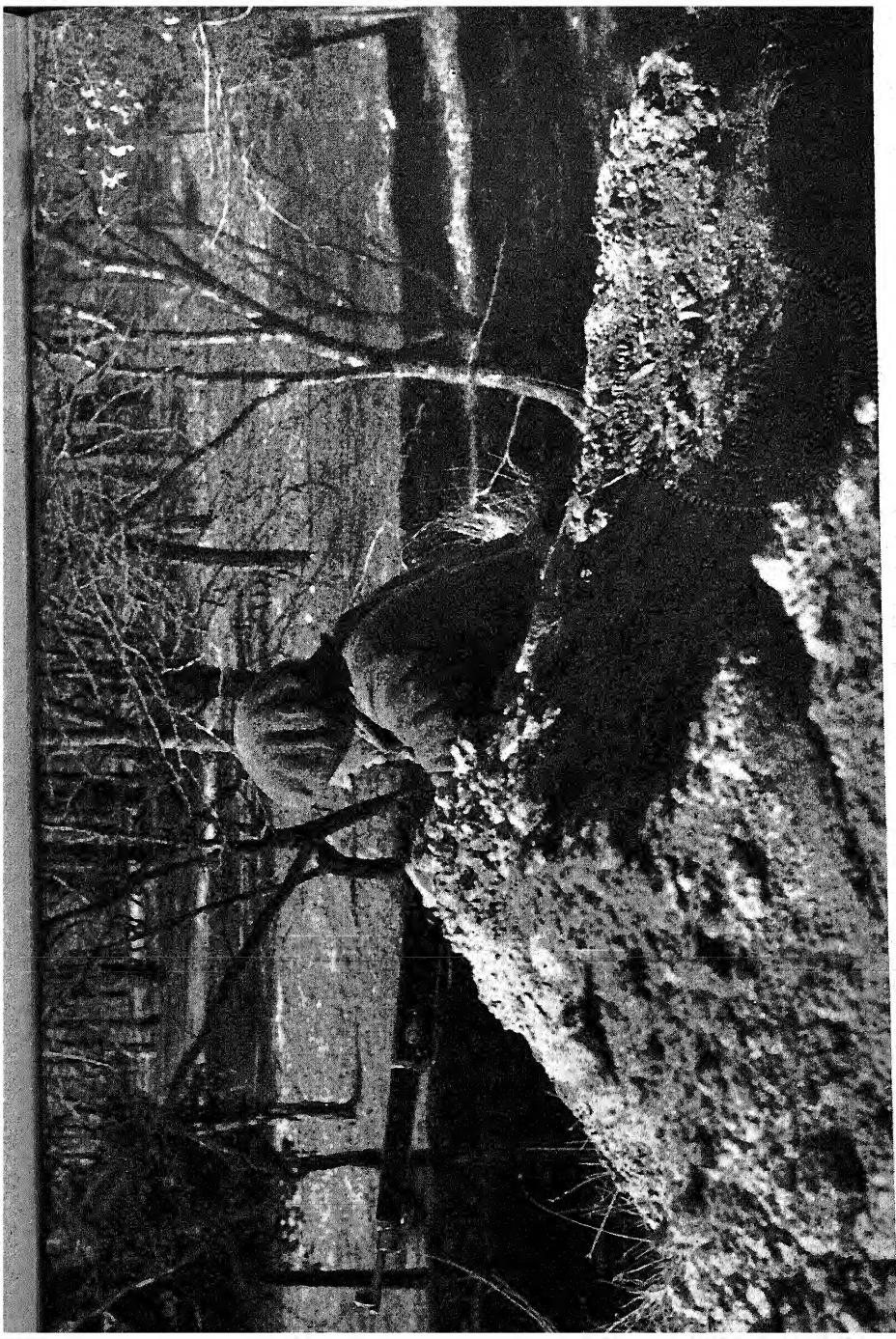
resort a few miles out of the capital. In the cool of the evening the madrileños would sit outside the cafés sipping wine, or lie under the green cover of the trees making love as Goya had painted them. To-day, Boadilla was a front-line base, the cafés empty and shuttered, an occasional villa in blackened ruins. Under the bare trees were dug shallow pits for machine-gunners and snipers to cover the retreat that was imminent. It was the duty of the English to fight a rearguard action. The wounded were being hastily evacuated from the hospital.

Unaccountably in the midst of the preparations, the order to retreat was countermanded—fifty of the French André Marty Battalion and the English group were left alone in the village. Orders were issued that the rearguard should fall back two kilometres to the reserve positions. The orders which the men received was that the reserves should fall back to new positions. The small garrison of Boadilla received instructions to wait. They were left, a solitary outpost, with the advancing Moors and Germans closing in on them. The nearest reserves were three miles behind them.

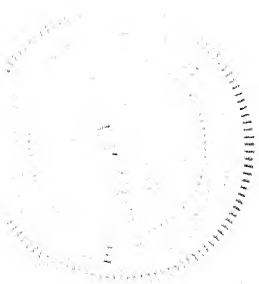
Romilly climbed a tree to watch for signs of life in the country before them; he was quickly down.

"Enemy tanks are surrounding the village, the woods are stiff with Moors."

Jeans made a quick decision: "There must be some



THE ENGLISH WERE LEFT, A SOLITARY OUTPOST



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mistake. Where is the French commander?" There were no signs of the commander, nor of his men either. At the hospital, the orderlies remained with the twenty odd wounded who had not been evacuated. A heavy fire had broken out; bullets sang and smacked among the trees. Jeans gave his last order: "Retreat in open formation. Birch and Jock every five hundred metres cover fire with Lewis guns. You others——" Jeans slumped down; bubbles oozed from a hole between his eyes.

They ran; whining death ran with them. Romilly and Jerry were last, a cross-fire now broke out—they were surrounded. On their left they could see the turbaned Moors moving forward led by the Italian whippet tanks. Ray Cox tumbled forward, a bullet in his thigh. "Get on, I'm done." He sat with his back to a tree—the Moors came on, he was still firing when he was hidden from sight by the trees.

Long Sid's height was his undoing—a tank machine-gunner saw him, four bullets tore into his stomach. The English rested for breath, while Sid died. Jock was the next, blood spurted from his neck; this tough little Highlander refused to die, he tied the wound in rough tourniquet and stumbled on, Jerry took his Lewis gun. Jerry didn't learn to use the Lewis gun in the army, but he knew all right. A band of a dozen Moors tried to cut the survivors off; firing from his waist, he mowed them down like corn.

Birch halted to open fire; his head snapped back, Joe saw him and turned to help. Birch was past aid; Joe gave a little cough, he crumpled, a bullet in his heart. "Best o' luv to muvver." Messer held him while he died. The steel whip that screamed over Messer, killed two more of the English; Harry Adley, a little ex-serviceman with a small café in Folkestone; and Bill Scott who survived the ambushes of the Black and Tans, and died in the once peaceful woods of Madrid.

Messer did not have time to feel sorry for Joe—two Moors stood in front of him. The first, he shot dead. His impetus carried him too close to the other to fire, he brought his rifle down on the Moor's skull. An automatic cracked, Messer stumbled, the steel-helmeted German fired again, the second shot completed his work. Behind them, Romilly and Jerry heard the wild yelling of the Moors as they entered the hospital, the screams of the wounded left them in no doubt what capture would mean. Mutilated bodies dropped into the trenches by night might stimulate hate and revenge in victory, but in retreat they spelt consequence and fear.

The luck of the English company was broken indeed; it had been a by-word in the Thaelmann Battalion. They had passed unscathed through the first attack on the Hill of the Angels in which their battalion's losses had been so heavy. During the

Reichswehr drive against the University City, they had been for two weeks in the front-line trenches. And now all of them had been annihilated in a retreat that should never have taken place. It was to me the supreme irony of war. The death of twelve individuals I had learned to know, and with the quick intimacy of danger, learned to love, was more tragic in its nearness than the destruction of any brigade.

Each knew why he died, they liked death none the better for it. Joe fought Fascism as instinctively as he fed his old hen. Birch had all the impersonal force of a convinced intellect. Messer was generous, he hated oppression from his heart; in any state he would have championed the underdog. Ray Cox, a Southampton clerk, must have needed courage to have broken with his office job which gave him a weekly sense of security, the most deadly of drugs. That courage held out to the end.

It was hard for the three survivors to realize what had happened; they were almost shot down by their own reserves when they reached their lines. The worst of all was the roll-call that night—name after name was unanswered, the German N.C.O. made a note "*gefallen*", to answer one's own name was a challenge to death.

And the war went on.

The winter sun was setting behind the Casa de

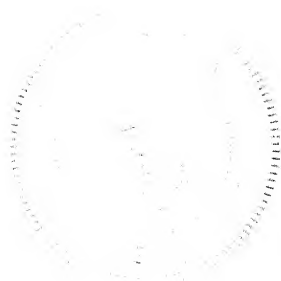
Campo, throwing the steel masts of the radio-station into sharp relief. Behind me, a cavalry patrol trotted leisurely up the Escorial Road. Through the pine-trees, I could see the University City, spread out, golden in the warming light; beyond and above it stood Madrid. The whiteness of the Telefonica contrasted with the warm red of the tiled roofs. Behind me in the Pardo, birds still sang, soon they would make way for the Holy Trinity of Krupp, Schneider and Vickers.

The cavalry patrol had disappeared when I walked back to the car. The chauffeur liked the war even less than I did. "Ça! to think that my father paid a thousand pesetas when I was a young man so that I needn't become a conscript, and now at fifty I am in the militia. One cannot run away from fate."

We drove slowly down the Escorial Road back towards Funecarral. "Zwing"—a shell screamed through the air. My companion was unmoved, he drove on without accelerating. "*Los nuestros!*" (It is ours.) Crash! the smooth surface of the road before us was a jagged hole, I smelt the cordite as we passed.

I remembered nothing more until, slowly, I awoke with a splitting pain in my head. Every movement was agony. It was an infinite labour to open my one eye, the other, if there at all, was heavily bandaged, my body was one large ache. I gave it up. When I woke again, the chauffeur was standing over me. "Hombre, we are fortunate, a shell struck the car full—pouf: no





car left." His arm was in a sling, his face covered with plaster.

For two days I stayed in the little hunting lodge in the Pardo, my injuries were not serious, although I had narrowly missed losing an eye. The militiaman was the best of nurses, when he changed my dressings he was as gentle as a woman. On the second day, my plump police officer arrived. "Ah, so you are determined to be killed. Here is your little blue book." He tossed my passport on to the table. "M'sier Sefton Delmer is returning to Paris next week, he wondered if you should not go before him, it will be some time before you can work again. We have arranged with Fräulein Ilse for a safe conduct to Valencia."

"What of the pastor?"

"Think no more about it, he was very, very useful to us, but his parish will need a new pastor." The police agent pulled on his gloves, "And now I shall drive you to the Gran Via, your things are waiting for you there."

Sefton Delmer, wrapped in a long black cloak and sipping cognac, looked the complete caballero. We were seated in the empty, half-dark hall of the Gran Via. "Ilse tells me that a car will be here by twelve, you will drive all night to be in Valencia to-morrow. Have you any money?"

I had about two hundred pesetas.

"Then you'll want some francs." Delmer pushed a pile of notes over to me. "They'll see you through."

Just after midnight, a uniformed guard came into the lounge, he crossed to our table. "Señor Scott Watson," I nodded, "will you come this way, the car is waiting." I shook hands with Delmer. "Look after yourself and don't run into any more shells."

C H A P T E R S I X T E E N

Louis is Nervous

A LOW, black Mercédès was drawn up outside the hotel, no lights were showing. My suitcase was packed into the back, the guard opened the door and I was inside. I was not alone—my companion was a woman, but it was too dark to distinguish her features. The guard sat in front with the chauffeur, and we were off.

"Are you glad to be leaving Madrid?"

I looked closer at my companion, I knew her voice. "Elviral what are you doing here?"

"I am leaving for Valencia, Ilse asked if I would take you. I could not refuse, your wounds, they are not bad?"

"No, they are healing already."

It was strange that I should leave Madrid with the first person I had met when I entered the city two months ago. Two months—it might have been two days or two years with the high nervous pressure of a city at war, time as I had known it, disappeared. In its place were a series of sensations, each more vivid than the last.

The last barricade of the city was past, we were on the Valencia Road. Our speed increased as the car's lights cut a path through the darkness. The night was bitterly cold, sudden banks of mist would force the car to crawl forward. We were nearing a mountain range. In places the road would drop away sheer into black space.

"*Dios*, it is cold," Elvira pulled her rug more closely about her. I was wearing a heavy overcoat I had bought in Madrid. "Here take this other rug, my coat is enough." I wrapped the other rug round her legs. It was now so cold that our breath frosted on the windows, my feet were numbed.

"Hombre, it is wiser we both have the two rugs over us." I shifted the piles of documents to my corner and moved next to Elvira, the rugs I arranged round us. The warmth of our bodies, the even throb of the powerful engine soon brought sleep.

I was awakened by a sudden braking, Louis, the guard, and our chauffeur were talking in low tones. Elvira lay curled up in my arms, fast asleep. From under her cap of black fur I could see the light gold of her hair. Behind me, I noticed the sudden glare of a car's headlights, it was this that interested Louis and the chauffeur. They both seemed satisfied, it was probably an escort we had picked up on the journey.

Elvira was so much of a woman, she was no longer

a driving force in a Government fighting for its existence, she was like a lovely tired child. I bent over her and kissed her very gently on the mouth. As I did so, the car swerved, the piled documents shifted and pressed me against her, half waking she kissed me back warmly.

"Elvira, I don't care what you think of me, I adore you."

She pressed her hand over my mouth. "At least be discreet. We may never see one another again, my work here will be long, it is the people not the individuals that matter. You yourself have seen how Communists die, we do not want martyrs, history has given us more than the Christian Church already. Sometimes it is necessary to die, better that way than slow death and degradation in a Fascist prison camp. Here you can face your enemy over rifle sights, is it not better than feeling his whip on your back. You want me, I can feel it, and perhaps I want you too. But what can I give you? My body for an hour, or a night. I could never give myself and you would hate me for it. It is better we part at Valencia to-morrow."

"We understand one another, it is just part of things that we should have met so strangely, only to part like this." I felt very alone and was silent.

"Don't brood, my dear—this war will not last for ever, when it is over I shall take a long, long holiday—I may even write to you." The lights of the car behind

us were reflected in Elvira's eyes. They were very tender, I kissed her again.

The roar of the engine of the passing car was deafening, I saw a black shape shoot past us on the near side, our chauffeur wrenched over the wheel and braked sharply as the passing car drew across our front wheels, forcing us to the edge of the road. Our tyres screamed as the car skidded round, instinctively I threw the rug over Elvira's head. As the car rolled over, its side-glass splintered, my hands stung.

Over the din of our wildly roaring engine, I heard the rattle of a machine-gun, our "escort" was taking no chances. The piled archives probably saved our lives; later, we found over ten bullets bedded in their thick paper. Our engine stopped because of the acute angle of the car, the pressure tank would force no spirit to the engine. The air reeked with petrol and blood. I heard the whine of the retreating car die away in the distance. Louis was moaning, but Elvira and the chauffeur were silent.

The crew of a food lorry helped me out through the roof of the car, my old wound had opened, the back of my neck was sticky, my hands throbbed, one of my teeth had been broken off in my mouth. Elvira seemed the most important thing in the world. Two militiamen lifted her out into the light of the lorry's headlamps. She was very quiet and pale; a thin trickle of blood ran from a cut on her forehead. She opened

her eyes, one of our rescuers poured a little cognac down her throat. "Bueno, she will be all right. The other," he pointed to Louis, "a bullet in his spine, he cannot live." The chauffeur was uninjured, but the sudden shock had stunned him. It was due to his presence of mind that things had not been worse—beyond the edge of the road was a drop of nearly a hundred and fifty feet to the road winding below.

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I stood looking up at the orange-trees, bright with fruit in the winter sunshine. Valencia was another world: here cafés were filled with men and women, before them plates of delicious food—fish, meat and vegetables. Sweet-shops displayed dishes of Turrón, the national Christmas delicacy. Shoppers crowded the side-walks and pressed against brilliantly lit windows. It was Christmas Eve, Valencia was *en fête*.

In a quiet café, I bought hot chocolate and fresh buns, then I drank coffee and ate toast, it was an orgy. I felt strangely happy. Elvira was leaving hospital that day, we should have dinner together and if she was not too tired a *flamenco* concert would complete our evening. I walked back towards my hotel. Coming towards the crowded street came a cloaked figure—his build and gait were familiar: it was Sefton Delmer, carried across his back was a large bag. "Well, well, if it isn't Santa Claus!"

"Damn me, here I am a king's messenger, I hope to win a nice little greyhound for my watch-chain." Delmer looked at me suspiciously. "What are you doing here? I was given to understand you were dead, this war's so full of rumours. Now you are alive, help me find His Majesty's Consul that I may deliver unto him the diplomatic bag."

"Where is the Consul?"

"That's the problem; at his hotel they say they are not sure—he is with the woman who limps. Very helpful."

Delmer sent me back to my hotel to pack. "We leave for Paris at twelve to-night, I don't know why I should, but I feel responsible for you. Get your *salvo-conducto* and be ready at the station for the train."

As soon as Delmer had gone, I realized how short a time I had left to see Elvira. My hotel, the Internacional, was next to the station. I left my packed bag in the hall. I ordered a table at the side of the restaurant.

Elvira was still pale when I met her at the hospital gates. Her forehead was bandaged. The darkness under her eyes seemed to increase their deep blue.

"Hombre, I am tired, walk slowly please."

We passed through the wide city square, above it in huge letters was a reminder: "The Front is only 110 Kilometres Away." A large map showed Teruel,

held by the Fascists, and Valencia. In the centre of the square, above a large propaganda display, a huge hand grasped a rifle: "Your Spain is in Danger."

Here, as in Madrid, were a swarm of street traders doing a great business in badges, caps and toys. A bronzed militiaman with a child of four or five in his arms stood before a toy stall. The little boy was choosing a Christmas present. He reached down for a toy soldier pointing a very realistic machine-gun. "That one, that one!"

"No, my *chico*, it is a bad thing, I fight to-day that you do not have to fight to-morrow. But look at this," he showed him a peasant pulling a wine-cart. "Vino, eh!" "No, that one, that one!" the child wanted a little lead machine-gunner.

We were both terribly excited with the food. We ate Arroz à la Valenciana, a famous local dish and then fruit and coffee. I offered Elvira a cigarette, she took one; I sat there too surprised to withdraw the packet; looking around the restaurant, his peaked cap at a jaunty angle, was Captain Grotto. I turned away, but it was too late, he had seen us, he swaggered through the crowded tables to where we sat.

"Ah, ha, the wounded troops!" he beckoned to the waiter, "Bring me a chair, I'll take dinner with my old friends here." Elvira looked at me in surprise, I turned to Captain Grotto, "I'm afraid we're just

having a little farewell dinner, I'm leaving on the twelve o'clock train to-night."

"Really, we ought to celebrate, *oiga! mas vino, comprende?* Just a bottle with me," he winked, "don't worry about paying it's on the War Office."

Elvira was frigid. "How interesting, the War Office is supporting you?"

"So they ought—I was brought down in flames by the Nazis, took two of 'em with me though."

I turned to Elvira, "We'd better be going, the concert starts at eight-thirty—do excuse us captain."

"That's O.K., not much of a one for music, but you ought to go to the Blue Angel cabaret. Jove, it's hot stuff!"

We made our escape. Was it my imagination or were we being followed? As we stopped to look at the shops, a man in a grey coat and black beret found something of interest a few windows behind us. I said nothing to Elvira, perhaps my nerves were playing tricks. When I saw him seated a few rows behind us, I was certain. "We're being followed, don't look round, three rows behind us, light coat and beret."

Elvira was not disturbed. "Ah! poor Alvarez is he then so obvious. They insist that I have a bodyguard after what happened on our journey."

"Yes, but *what* happened?"

"You promise not to speak of it? Well, some think

it was the F.A.I., but I do not believe it, we work now with the Anarchists better than ever before. In civil war, one may not trust one's brother, we may have Fascists in our army command, as we have friends in the Fascist camp. We trust a man until he makes a slip, and then it is usually his last."

Our talk was cut short by the people's applause as the singers and the guitarists walked on to the stage. "Viva la C.N.T., viva la F.A.I., viva la U.G.T." The last wild throbbing note of the singer was drowned in the Olé's and answering Viva's of the audience, the concert was ended. We stood outside in the moonlit street. "You are tired, you must go home."

"You wish to be rid of me so soon."

"No, but your wound, it is your first day out of hospital."

Elvira laughed. "I shall not die just yet, we must see you on your train, lest you miss it."

"I wish to God I could miss it, I'm bourgeois enough to want to spend Christmas Day with you."

We walked through Valencia's main square, silvered in the moonlight was the giant arm raising the rifle to quiet stars.

"Perhaps—who knows—another Christmas we may meet again."

Waiting at the hotel was Captain Grotto. "Come on you two love-birds," Elvira gave him a look that

made him almost drop my suitcase, "not much time, you know, got a sleeper?"

"No, I haven't, don't you worry about that."

The captain would not be discouraged. The Barcelona train lay in the almost empty station; of Delmer there was no sign. In execrable Spanish, Grotto told the guard that I was a friend of his, a great hero and must have a sleeper. Elvira said nothing, she only smiled as the pantomime went on. At last my suitcase was piled into an empty sleeper.

"Capitan Grotto; Capitan Grotto!" a uniformed porter walked along the side of the train shouting. Grotto poked his head out of the train window. "*Oiga! yo soy Capitan Grotto!*" He turned to us. "Sorry, folks, I'm wanted at the hotel on the telephone," he looked around him and whispered, "it's Caballero—he can't do without me." He saluted and was gone.

"Was it so wicked of me?" Elvira was smiling. "I asked Alvarez to telephone to him, when I saw he was at the hotel."

"It was clever of you—a little of the Captain goes a long, long way."

The whistle was blowing as I kissed Elvira good-bye. Both of us were sad at heart. There was a terrible finality about that parting, I felt as thousands had felt since the war began. The train began to move, Elvira raised her arm in the Communist

salute, "Viva la Republica!" I waved until the bend of the platform hid her from sight.

The door of one of the sleepers opened, a head was thrust into the corridor, "Has that awful man gone?" It was Delmer. "There's a spare bunk in here."

C H A P T E R S E V E N T E E N

Single to Paris

"MY dear fellow, I've never seen a city so changed, and I've known Barcelona for some years. I saw 'em in 1934 when a kid's popgun would've sent them running for dear life, and saw 'em in the Plaza Cataluña taking machine-guns with their bare hands and a few suicide guns." Lynn Winterdale Franklin, Consul of the United States of America, lit a cigar.

"After that I watched 'em running round, blowing each other's heads off, but I've never seen 'em as they are now. Everything here is quiet, city runs like a clock. So does all Cataluña they tell me. And there's a determination to win this war, that's like nothing I've seen here before. They're like a lot of kids that have suddenly grown up."

"Do you think they will win?"

"Now you're asking something, I'm the American Consul, not the Delphic Oracle."

Through the window of our café, I saw that the yellow trams, too, had undergone a change—now they were bright with new black and red paint; in place of

the old initials of the Barcelona Traction Company, were the letters C.N.T., workers were running their own transport.

In the Plaza de Cataluña I saw a car tearing down from the Paseo de Gracia, I heard the familiar roar of a klaxon. A white-gloved policeman stepped out into the road. The car stopped its mad rush, the policeman spoke to its occupants and shook a warning finger. The car moved off soberly silent. Barcelona had changed—the cafés were no longer full of soldiers who had never fired a shot. As I walked down the half-empty Ramblas, I noticed that the picturesque bandits had disappeared, a crowd of small children watched an old man with a performing goat and monkey; the strange trio went through their act with a melancholy detachment.

Many of the women, I noticed, were dressed in black. They still bravely wore the political badge of their party. Rosita's flat was empty. From the old concierge I learned that she was on the Huesca front. She had no news for me.

I had my last meal in Spain in the Caracoles Tavern. The same blackened rafters, the same waiters, the same dishes cooking on the immense open ranges. The past two months seemed like a distant nightmare. Delmer raised his glass, "Here's to the English Company, right or wrong they're some of the bravest boys I've ever known."

It was dark when we arrived at Port Bou. The informal-looking costumes of my first visit had given way to steel helmets and khaki, the rifles were far from modern, but more efficient than the suicidal weapons of the early days. Our passports and papers were scrutinized, we passed through the frontiers, on to the Paris Express. As the train entered the International Tunnel, I watched the khaki-clad sentry outlined against the lights of the station until he disappeared.

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